The Religious Affections

Jonathan Edwards.

Books for the Heart

Edited by ALEXANDER SMELLIE, M.A.

A TREATISE CONCERNING THE RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS

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A TREATISE CONCERNING THE RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS

By JONATHAN EDWARDS

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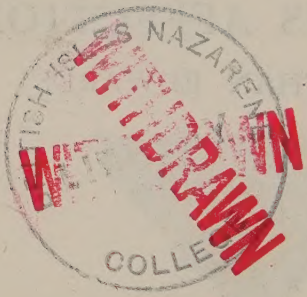

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NOTE TO THE EDITOR FROM DR. ALEXANDER WHYTE

MY heart bounded when I saw The Religious Affections *announced under your editorship, and so cheap too. I hope to overtake Edwards during the coming session of my Classes, when* The Affections *will be our Text-book. Many whose blessing is worth earning will bless you for Edwards's masterpiece in this beautiful shape.*

ALEXANDER WHYTE.

EDINBURGH,
October 7, 1898.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

It has been found necessary, in order to bring *The Religious Affections* within the size of the volumes included in this series, to abbreviate it to some extent. This has been done, for the most part, by the omission of a number of the Scripture quotations and by the leaving out of the Notes.

CONTENTS

PAGE

Note to the Editor, from Dr. Alexander Whyte . v
Publisher's Note vi
Introduction ix
The Author's Preface xxxiv

Part I. Concerning the Nature of the Affections and their Importance in Religion 1
Section I. Remarks on the Affections . . 5
II. True Religion lies much in the Affections . 10
III. Inferences from the Doctrine . . 34

Part II. Showing what are no Certain Signs that Religious Affections are truly Gracious, or that they are not 42
Section I. That they are Raised very high is no Sign . 43
II. Great Effects on the Body are no Sign . 47
III. Fluency and Fervour are no Sign . 52
IV. That they are not excited by us is no Sign 54
V. That they come with Texts of Scripture is no Sign 61
VI. That there is an appearance of Love is no Sign 65
VII. That Religious Affections are of many kinds is no Sign . . . 67
VIII. Joys following in a certain Order are no Sign 72
IX. Much Time and much Zeal in Duty are no Sign. 86
X. Much expression of Praise is no Sign . 89
XI. Great Confidence is no certain Sign . 91
XII. Affecting Relations are no Sign . . 107

PAGE

PART III. SHOWING WHAT ARE DISTINGUISHING SIGNS OF TRULY GRACIOUS AND HOLY AFFECTIONS . . 117
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS 117
Section I. Gracious Affections are from divine Influence 122
II. Their object is the Excellence of divine Things 164
III. They are founded on the moral Excellency of Objects . . . 178
IV. They arise from divine Illumination . 191
V. They are attended with a Conviction of Certainty 217
VI. They are attended with Evangelical Humiliation 236
VII. They are attended with a Change of Nature 266
VIII. They beget and promote the Temper of Jesus 271
IX. Gracious Affections soften the Heart . 282
X. They have beautiful Symmetry and Proportion. 290
XI. False Affections rest Satisfied in Themselves 300
XII. The Fruit in Christian Practice . 305
(1) Christian Practice is the chief Sign to Others 323
(2) Christian Practice is the chief Sign to Ourselves . . . 341

INTRODUCTION

Jonathan Edwards—the fifth child and the only son in a family of eleven children—was born, in the October of 1703, in the little town of East Windsor in Connecticut. His father, a man of considerable learning and of outshining godliness, was minister of the Gospel there; his mother, Esther Stoddard, belonged to a household well known in the religious annals of New England, and was herself regarded as surpassing her husband in force and freshness of intellect. Thus the early surroundings of the boy were favourable to the development alike of mind and heart, and he breathed from the outset an atmosphere which was singularly wholesome and pure.

But no influences of heredity and environment will account for a personality so imposing as that of Jonathan Edwards. He is one of the kings in the realm of thought, and, in their select and peerless fellowship, he stands in the forefront; his place is beside "Plato the wise, and large-browed Verulam, the first of those who know." It surprises us to see with what absolute mastery,

with what royal and inimitable freedom, he moves through a world of ideas the most subtle and abstruse which it is possible to conceive. The more apparently insoluble the problems are which confront him, the greater is the satisfaction he feels in grappling with them and in extorting their secrets; that was "his pastime," Henry Rogers says, "which to other men would be severest toil." America had given birth to no such imperial intellect before; and Europe, with her long past behind her, could point only to one here and another there who were fitted to be named in the same category. The East Windsor parsonage, though it was a congenial and ennobling home, had little to do, after all, with the fashioning of a brain so keen in its penetration, so irresistible and triumphant in its logic, so comprehensive in its sweep. The New England of Edwards's youth was just emerging from its long struggle with unkindly nature and hostile men; it was an altogether unlikely soil for the nurture of one of the supreme philosophers of history. Indeed, he had not the opportunities which most of us regard as essential even to moderate attainment. It was his perpetual sorrow that he had access to comparatively few books, and that he could gain only by circuitous routes the information which lay at the doors of other men. When, in the last year of his life, he was called to the Presidency of Princeton College, he would fain have excused himself, for this reason, amongst others, that he

felt the insufficiency of his mental furnishings;—he laments the defectiveness of his acquaintance with higher mathematics and the Greek classics; if he teaches Hebrew, he says, it will be to improve himself as well as to instruct others.

These things have all to be remembered when we are estimating the extraordinary magnitude and massiveness of the man. It is, so to speak, through a tangle of brushwood, and over a confusion of rocks and boulders, that he makes his way, with such seeming ease, to his Alpine heights. Now and then, with long intervals lying between, we encounter natures whose genius is too transcendent to be explained, in anything but an infinitesimal degree, by upbringing and education; it is the very breath of God Himself. Edwards had one of these rare and exceptional natures. No trammels of circumstance, no poverty of aids and advantages, could ever have hindered him from leaping to the loftiest rank.

His mind awoke before his heart, and it appeared at first as if his greatness were to be that solely of the metaphysician. He was as precocious as Blaise Pascal. When he was fourteen, he read Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding* with the zest with which a boy of to-day glories in the romances of Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson. It stirred strange new thoughts within him. It widened immensely his intellectual horizon. It set him to the task of drawing his own inferences and formulating his own conclusions; for from the

commencement Edwards was *nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri.* He began to fill his notebooks with speculations about outside nature, about the mind of man, about the being of God; and in these early and tentative efforts there are the germs of some of the favourite beliefs of his maturer years. Already he was feeling his way to truths which he was by and by to make peculiarly his own.

But the spiritual quickening was not long delayed. He gives us no date for his conversion, nor does he tell us when it was that he connected himself by public profession with the Christian Church. Jonathan Edwards has many affinities with John Calvin; and this is one of them that in personal temperament, to those at least beyond the circle of his home, he is shy and stern and polished and reserved — there was a Most Holy Place in his soul, from which he did not choose that the curtain should ever be entirely withdrawn, and within which Jesus and he had their interviews alone. But in the Diary, which he commenced to keep while he was a student at Yale and New-haven, and in the Resolutions of a few years later, which portray in remarkable language the ideal to which he was eager to climb, we can trace his progress towards the light and peace of the Kingdom of God. It is significant that, when the progress reaches its goal and he knows himself a child of heaven, he has been won and conquered by the vision of divine glories rather than impelled

forward by the sense of human guilt and need. No one in after years insisted more strenuously on the awful fact of sin, but it was not the conviction of sin which was the most potent element in his own effectual call. No doubt he realised the heaviness of the burden which lay on his back, and something of those terrible issues which await the soul that is unbelieving and disobedient; but it was the sight of the splendours of the Godhead which allured and enticed him out of the City of Destruction into the Pilgrim highway. The profound consciousness of shortcoming and error came later in his spiritual history, with the growing knowledge of God's requirements and the deepening of his own holiness. It is a transcript from his personal experience which Edwards gives in one of the tenderest passages of this book on the Religious Affections,—"A true saint is like a little child in this respect: he never had any godly sorrow before he was born again, but since has it often in exercise; as a little child, before it is born and while it remains in darkness, never cries; but, as soon as it sees the light of day, it begins to cry, and thenceforward is often crying."

So this man, who both from his pulpit and in every book he wrote was to lift God to so sublime a place, who walked with Him each day of his life, who in a far more pregnant and fruitful sense than simple Brother Lawrence practised the divine presence, was prepared for his work by the revelation of God's beauty and majesty. Reading one

day these words of Scripture, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever, Amen," he was suddenly impressed with a sort of inward and sweet delight in God and divine things. He had Isaiah's disclosure of the Throne high and lifted up, and it transformed him, too, into a prophet of the Lord. It was the first of many subsequent visions of a similar kind, which filled his heart with a glow of ardour, and brought tears of joy to his eyes. Jonathan Edwards is of the company of the enthusiasts and mystics as well as a prince in the guild of the philosophers. He had ecstasies and raptures which, in their miracle and glory, could never be explained in words; language is poor and inadequate when it has to deal with these surpassing marvels. Often it seemed to him as though he were alone in the mountains or in some solitary wilderness, conversing familiarly with Christ, and wrapt and swallowed up in God. He enjoyed many a foretaste and prelibation of heaven before he crossed its threshold.

The Resolutions, to which allusion has been made, and which may be read at length in Dr. Dwight's biography, give us the picture of one who is entering on the business of life with a foresight and self-control which are as unusual as they are noble. "*Resolved*, When I think of any theorem in divinity to be solved, immediately to do what I can towards solving it, if circumstances do not hinder"; "*Resolved*, Never to say anything at

all against anybody, but when it is perfectly agreeable to the highest degree of Christian honour and of love to mankind, agreeable to the lowest humility and sense of my own faults and failings, and agreeable to the golden rule"; "*Resolved,* If ever I live to years, that I will be impartial to hear the reasons of all pretended discoveries, and receive them if rational, how long soever I have been used to another way of thinking"; "On the supposition that there was to be but one individual in the world, at any one time, in all respects of a right stamp, having Christianity always shining in its true lustre, and appearing excellent and lovely from whatever part and in whatever character viewed: *Resolved,* To act just as I would do if I strove with all my might to be that one who should live in my time." There were seventy of those magnificent engagements with which this young man in his eighteenth and nineteenth years gladly fettered himself. They are, as the old seer told the lad Gareth beneath the gateway at Camelot,

> "Such vows as is a shame
> A man should not be bound by, yet the which
> No man can keep."

But, because he was strengthened with might by the Spirit of God, Jonathan Edwards kept them to his dying day.

He had been tutor at Yale, and had preached for a short time in New York, before he was ordained at Northampton in February 1727. There

are few ministries in the religious history of the world so memorable as the Northampton ministry of Edwards. It lasted for twenty-three years, and he meant it to last longer still—until he should exchange the work and worship of the Church on earth for those of the city where Christ's servants serve Him and see His face. It is impossible to do justice here to its great characteristics. It made large demands on the intellect, for it was supremely and always didactic—a ministry which persevered, Sabbath after Sabbath, in sowing the most vitalising seed and in lodging the most momentous truth in the mind. Yet, although he exacted so much from his hearers, and although "he could not be called at any time a popular preacher in the ordinary sense," what intenseness palpitated, what passionate earnestness throbbed and burned, in every sermon! He never was cold and statuesque. In Christ's stead he besought men to be reconciled to God. He isolated the listeners in the pews, placing each of them apart, and rendering it impossible for any to escape in the crowd. His pale face and tall slender form made evident the delicacy and nervousness of his constitution; but we read that he preached with an authoritative certainty of manner, as of one who had a direct insight into the eternal realities, and who knew that he carried his commission from the King Himself. And behind the speaker and the thinker, there was the man in his purity, his sincerity, his devotion—the saintliest figure in Puritan America. Can we wonder that

often, in the homely Northampton Church, the walls which separate the unseen and spiritual world from the world of ordinary life appeared to be thrown down, and the parishioners found themselves face to face with God and Christ, with the myriads of angels and the festal assembly of the firstborn, with the unspeakable joys of heaven and the intolerable agonies of hell?

There are some of Edwards's sermons so tremendous that we cannot read them without trembling. Though it is a century and a half ago, and though they come to us no longer through the living voice but only through the printed page, the trumpet still rings out its "dolorous blast" with an awful energy. He believed that it was a foolish and cruel good-nature which left men in ignorance of the wages and consequences of their sin, and he could depict these as few have ever been able to do. "Beneath the quiet manner," Professor Allen says, "were the fires of a volcano." At times the strain grew unbearable. The people would break out in a tempest of tears and cries, and the preacher would be compelled to pause until their distress had subsided a little. Surely no ambassador has been more uncompromisingly faithful in his proclamation of the terrors of his Lord, as there has been none more tender in delineating His infinite grace.

Twice over, during the course of the ministry at Northampton, there were great movements of

revival; and the later movement made itself felt far beyond the boundaries of the Massachusetts town. But to what a pathetic and tragical close the epoch-making ministry came! It was the summer of 1750. A strong feeling of resentment had been aroused among the members of his congregation—the congregation which owed him an incalculable debt — by the restraints which Edwards was anxious to impose on the reading of the young committed to his care. He feared that fatal harm was being done by some of the books of which they were growing over-fond—that the edge of the spiritual life was being sadly blunted, and that its fine and delicate bloom was in danger of destruction; Mr. Leslie Stephen thinks that *Pamela* was one of the sources of disquiet. The discipline which their minister proposed to exercise was denounced as tyrannical, not only by the young people themselves but by their parents too. But this was merely the culmination of a disaffection which had been smouldering for years. For a considerable time, Jonathan Edwards had been dissatisfied with the easy terms on which communicants were admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. His grandfather and predecessor, Mr. Stoddard, a man held in veneration through a wide district round, had regarded the sacrament as in itself a converting ordinance, and had urged all, whether they were true disciples of Christ or no, to come to it. At first he had not felt himself at liberty to contradict the teaching of one who stood

high in his esteem and love; but the hour came when the conscience of Edwards compelled him to speak out. Both in his discourses and then in his *Qualifications for Full Communion,* he strove to make clear that the table of the King is a trysting-place for those who are surrendered to His sceptre and desirous to confess their loyalty and love. But he failed to carry his congregation with him. The opposition only grew more intense and determined. It passed into anger, into malice, into abuse, until the story becomes altogether painful to read. At last, by a vote of the church—a vote of two hundred against twenty—it was decided that the pastoral relation should be dissolved.

Edwards seldom appears to greater advantage than at this time, when the stars in their courses seemed to be fighting against him. "He nothing common did, or mean, upon that memorable scene." He had counted the cost, for himself and those who were dear to him, of obedience to the categorical imperatives of duty and of God; and now, when the worst had come, he did not faint in the day of adversity. We can still catch the varied accents in his voice when he preached his last sermon in Northampton — the righteous indignation, the solemn appeal, the wistful yearning with which the speaker turns to his own sons and daughters in the faith. There is a mediæval legend of a statue of Jesus which was always taller than the tallest man who approached it, and Edwards reminds us of that statue often, but never more

conspicuously and grandly than when lovers and acquaintances and friends went back and walked no more with him. "The place, methinks, suits with my spirit," the maiden Mercy declared of the Valley of Humiliation; he might have repeated the good confession.

He had human comforters, too; and none braver than his wife, of whom it was sometimes said that she was even more advanced in the heavenward road than he was himself. Sarah Pierrepont is among the most gracious and winsome heroines of the Church. When she was a child of thirteen, her future husband wrote the beautiful tribute which Dr. Chalmers so admired: "They say there is a young lady in Newhaven who is beloved by that great Being who made and rules the world, and that there are certain seasons in which this great Being, in some way or other invisible, comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding great delight, and that she hardly cares for anything except to meditate on Him." There is abundant evidence that, even at this early age, the tribute was wholly deserved.

> "So held she through her girlhood; as it were
> An angel-watered lily, that near God
> Grows and is quiet."

In later years the home at Northampton was a very attractive one. Sarah Edwards took pains that, by her own wise housewifely management, the great theologian with whom she was mated

should be kept free from harassments, to spend his thirteen hours a day in his study. Her children reverenced as well as loved her. Like Melancthon's Katharine Krapp, she was boundlessly charitable, and delighted to entertain strangers; — it was under her roof that young David Brainerd, the saint and the martyr, died in 1747, though indeed he was no stranger, for, had he lived, he would have married her daughter Jerusha. There was much more of the joyous sunshine of assurance in her temperament than was common in the Christianity of her age and country; and at times, as in the Great Awakening, she was admitted to a nearness of communion with God at which her husband himself marvelled, and the record of which he was careful to take down from her own lips. And now, when the pitiless and pelting tempest broke, and the home—at once so humanly tender and so divinely hallowed—had to be left behind, she was, next to Christ, the staff on which he leaned.

It is interesting to read that Scottish Presbyterianism would fain have drawn him, at this season when things were so critical and unpromising, away from Congregationalism and from America. Dr. John Erskine, and others of his correspondents on this side of the Atlantic, appealed to him to cross the sea, and promised him a heartfelt welcome in the Church of the Westminster Confession. He was disposed, too, to think kindly of the invitation. But, after

some months of waiting, a new door was opened among his own people, in the little settlement of Stockbridge, forty miles to the west of Northampton. It was a sort of missionary outpost, and a large part of his work lay henceforward among the Red Indians. There is something very inspiriting and very holy in the spectacle of the master-thinker of his time emptying himself, as the Son of God had done, and stooping to teach these unlettered savages the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. He fought their battles against rapacious colonists who would have robbed them of their due. He set himself by their side, as if he were one of themselves. He looked forward now to dying in their midst.

But, when death was close at hand, at the age of fifty-four, he received an unexpected call to become the President of Princeton, in succession to his own son-in-law, the earlier and the better Aaron Burr. There were many obstacles, he thought, in his way—the expense of removal, to one who was far from rich; the doubt whether he was sufficiently equipped in certain departments of intellectual knowledge; "his low tide of spirits, often occasioning a kind of childish weakness and contemptibleness of speech and behaviour"; above all, his devotion to his studies, and his desire to be left in his quiet resting-place to write what he meant to be his greatest book, on the History of Redemption, a history which was to begin and to

end with the everlasting years of God, all events and epochs in time being viewed *bus specie eternitatis*. But his reluctance was overcome, and he accepted the honourable and responsible office. At length he stood in a position befitting him; but God had yet higher things in store. It was January of 1758 when he went to Princeton, and on the 22nd of March he was dead, smitten down by the scourge of smallpox. As the end approached, his thoughts went out to his absent wife, away in the home at Stockbridge. "Tell her," he said to his daughter, "that the uncommon union which has so long subsisted between us has been of such a nature as I trust is spiritual, and therefore will continue for ever." After this, when he seemed insensible, he spoke once more —"Trust in God, and ye need not fear." Six months later, Sarah Edwards followed her husband to his place, and hers, at the right hand of the Throne. They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided.

By universal confession of the princeliest leaders in the world of thought, Jonathan Edwards must be included among those whose gifts are of the supremest sort.

His most famous books, on the intellectual and theological side, were the product of his latest years. *The Freedom of the Will, The Defence of the Doctrine of Original Sin, The Discussion of the Nature*

of True Virtue, The Treatise on God's Last End in the Creation, were all written in the Stockbridge period of his life; and the majority of them were not published until after his earthly tasks were done, and his body had been laid to rest in the Princeton Churchyard. It was a polemical purpose which inspired these great works—the purpose of refuting Arminianism. But, in themselves, they are among the monumental books of history. They have the incorruptible quality, the asbestos element, in them. A latent fire pulses and quivers under the acute and victorious and remorseless argument, and there is that in their pages which will keep them vital and vitalising so long as men crave great thoughts to live and die with.

The Freedom of the Will is, as Isaac Taylor said, "a classic in metaphysics"; and, whether or no we admit its thesis that human liberty must live and move and have its being within the sphere of a divine determinism, it throws its spell over us. Mr. Lecky has condemned the treatise on Original Sin as "one of the most revolting books that have ever proceeded from the pen of man"; but, when a shallow optimism beguiles us with its enchantments, and when life is painted, in M. Renan's fashion, as an affectionate picnic and "a delightful excursion through reality," we need the Puritanism of Edwards to remind us that things are not so far removed from disaster and tragedy, and that there is a far-reaching and deep-seated alienation which

separates man from God. It may be that, in his consideration of the nature of True Virtue, he sometimes makes over-exacting demands of our frail and storm-driven humanity; but he is himself one of the high men who died in the pursuit of great things, and, when he depicts the love of God as the first beginning and the last end of our thoughts and words and ways, he portrays his own motive and his own goal. And as for creation, Edwards tells us that it is the unveiling of the divine glory, the publishing of some of the syllables in the august and adorable and blessed Name of God, the writing out in legible characters of a little of His matchless and unfathomable perfection. This man always walks on the sublimest levels. To us, who look up to him from far beneath, he seems to have his proper place among the cherubim who know.

But sometimes he draws nearer still to the sacred Presence and the gracious Face. He takes rank among the seraphim who burn. That is the peerless society in which we find him when we read *The Religious Affections.*

It is an older book than those others. It was published in 1746, and before that, it had been preached in a series of sermons to his congregation in 1742 and 1743;—were they not a richly favoured people to listen to discourses which laid bare to them the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven? It was the Great Revival which gave birth to the book.

In the closing months of 1734, and all through 1735, when Edwards had been for some seven or eight years minister of his charge, the plenteous rains of the Holy Spirit began to fall on the souls he was so eager to instruct and bless. The town, he wrote, was "never so full of love, never so full of joy and yet so full of distress, as it was then." Whenever men and women met, and it mattered nothing whether they were old or young, the talk turned on divine and eternal things. There were meetings in private houses as well as in the church. A profound and universal concern about religion took possession of the place. And through it all Edwards moved, his heart filled with thankfulness, and his mind intent on scrutinising these goings of God in His sanctuary. He noted that, first, the awakened consciousness was plunged into depths of gloom and fear. It realised that there was awful danger impending. Its whole energies were strained and bent to escape from the wrath to come. Then he saw the troubled soul learning to acknowledge the sovereignty of God, and to leave itself implicitly in His hands, and to confess its need of the mediation of Christ. And, by and by, after many confused strivings and many humbling discoveries, he beheld it arriving at the happy harbour of salvation, the storm changed into a calm at God's command and will. These were the blessed sights he found on every side of him. He studied them, during that strange and glorious year of 1735, with the keen mental interest of the psychologist and

the rejoicing gratitude of the bond-servant of Jesus Christ.

Then, to his great grief, the splendid vision faded into the light of common day. Worldliness and sin commenced to reassert themselves in Northampton. But, though the reign of grace had declined, there were signs that erelong it might return. For this Edwards waited and prayed and toiled; and God gave him the desires of his heart. In 1740, the Revival came back, like the reappearance of spring after a temporary and disheartening winter. This time it was destined to spread far beyond his own parish, through New England first, and then over the sea to Britain and the Continent of Europe. It became the wonderful spiritual quickening which we associate with the names of Whitefield and Wesley, as well as with that of Edwards. It had its blemishes and blunders, which its enemies magnified, and which stirred poignant regrets in its warmest friends. There were often alarming and disquieting bodily effects. There was an idea, which soon became too prevalent, that God and Christ and heaven and hell were revealed immediately to the soul; and thus men disparaged the written Word and the Spirit's employment of it as His instrument. There were itinerant preachers who pushed themselves forward, and who frequently were very severe in their strictures on the Church's ordained ministers. There was real danger that the settled order of God's house should be overturned. These were

mournful and mysterious flaws, and Edwards lamented their presence and wished to have them rectified. But about the work of God itself, its genuineness, its depth, its marvellous effects, he had no manner of doubt. "Who that saw the state of things in New England a few years ago," he asks, "would have thought that in so little a time there would be such a change?" The conscience of the people had been roused into a new sensitiveness. The young had laid aside their levity. The taverns were deserted. The wealthy had relinquished their vanities. The Bible was loved and pondered, and the Lord's Day was religiously observed. Old quarrels were ended, and those who had been at variance were joining hands again in brotherliness and amity. Could these things be Satan's spurious counterfeit—his mirage which dazzled the eye and befooled the heart? Were they not God's superhuman and irrefutable reality?

In connection with the Awakening of 1735, Edwards wrote the *Narrative of Surprising Conversions*; in connection with the later movement of 1740 and the subsequent years, he gave to the world two books, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*, and the *Thoughts on the Revival*. Afterwards came the *Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections*. It represents his best and maturest conclusions on the great theme with which it deals.

Its style has often been stigmatised in no

measured terms. And indeed we have little of the point and pathos and mother-wit of John Bunyan and Thomas Shepard, little of the sonorous eloquence of Howe, little of the Oriental fragrance of Rutherford. We are told that, in his later life, Edwards regretted that he had paid such small attention to graces of diction, and expressed himself as well aware of the persuasive virtue which lies in words fitly chosen. In his own writings it seems many a time as if he were thinking aloud, and were throwing out his thoughts just as they came to him, in all their ruggedness and all their richness, with no attempt to chisel them into shape and to give them perfection of form. And yet, if we read this book with any care, we shall find that, regarded simply in its literary aspect, it has many passages brimming over with tenderness, and many which move us by their massive strength of utterance, and some too that are melodious with a great organ music which must leave its echoes reverberating in our hearts. The indictment of the style of *The Affections* has been stated extravagantly and pressed too far.

There is an indubitable sadness in the tone of the book. The prevailing atmosphere is that of October rather than of May. It is as though, during the years which had elapsed since the passing of the Revival, Edwards had grown more and more alive to its faults and to the excesses which could be charged against it. He never lost his faith that the wind of the Spirit had been blowing, beneficently and conqueringly, over the

valley of dry bones; but he was cut to the quick when he remembered the variety of false experiences, the hypocrisies, the degenerations, which accompanied the Awakening. In these pages he strives to leave behind him the accidents of time and place, the disillusionments of recent experience, the men and women from whom he had hoped great things which never came. He forgets the morning clouds which had looked so rosy in the early dawn but had vanished so quickly, and the rivers that had set out with volume and sparkle and ripple, only to lose themselves in the sand. He takes his ideal into his secret chamber, and considers it in the light of Scripture and of what the divine Spirit had taught his own soul. Thus *The Religious Affections* has no mere local and transient interest, as the presentment of a fleeting and disappointing episode in the history of the Church; it lives and will live as the portraiture of the men who are after God's heart.

Certain features in the portrait strike us especially. One of them is its caution and balance—the way in which the artist discriminates, and sifts, and sets this consideration over against that other, and gives to each its appropriate value and weight. And another is its completeness; when we have taken it all in, we recognise that here, beyond question, is the picture of the soul which under the tuition of divine grace has grown worthy of union with God Himself. Again, the book leaves with us, as few books do, the sense of the arduousness of the

Christian life. "The righteous scarcely are saved," we feel when we are in the company of Jonathan Edwards. Such delusions may ensnare the heart as it climbs toward God's high heaven; such nets may entangle it; such principalities and powers are fighting against it—ah, there is no progress half so serious as this, there is no campaign against such fearful odds. If God were not for us and in us, we should be disgraced and slain before an hour had passed.

At times, as has been pointed out by more than one, Edwards seems too pure and sublimated and lofty. Is it the case, we ask, that "the first objective ground of gracious affections is the transcendently excellent and amiable character of divine things as they are in themselves, and not any conceived relation they bear to self or self-interest"? May not gratitude to the God who has done great things for him be the earliest feeling of the young disciple, and delight in the stainlessness and grandeur of that God Himself only a subsequent experience, which comes after fellowship and intimacy with the Father and the Son and the Spirit? Archbishop Trench has a little ballad of Haroun al Raschid, which carries in it a spiritual lesson. It tells how, above all his slaves, the great Caliph loved an Ethiopian whose face was hideous as the night. For once, when some of his pearls fell from a broken casket, and he bade his attendants gather them for their own, and they threw themselves immediately on the glittering

spoil, the Ethiopian remained beside him moveless —this his creed,

> "True servant's title he may wear,
> He only, who has not
> For his lord's gifts, how rich soe'er,
> His lord himself forgot."

And that is indisputable. But, in the family of the King of kings, He gives us first without money and without price His goodly pearls—forgiveness, reconciliation, the ending of our fear, the entrance to His favour, the redemption which Jesus has won. He will not blame us, if we thank Him for His treasure before we rise to the contemplation of Himself. If the disinterested affection follow, as follow it must when ours is the childlike heart, God will be well content.

And yet — and yet, *da mihi magistrum.* Not a day passed, Jerome tells us, in which Cyprian of Carthage did not address the command to his amanuensis, "Give me the master!" And then the amanuensis would take down some one of the treatises of Tertullian,—Tertullian with his originality, his profundity, his force and fulness of thought, his speculation, his clear and convincing dialectic. Everyone of us who would grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, everyone who would read aright his own heart, and would learn what God requires of him, must say of *The Religious Affections,* "Da mihi magistrum!" It savours of sacrilege to hint any criticism of a book

which soars to such heights and which is so instinct with the wisdom that cometh from afar.

In these pages Jonathan Edwards has asserted for all time the inwardness and spirituality of true religion. It is far removed, he assures us, from a mechanical routine of duty; it is no cold and careful taskwork. They are greatly mistaken who imagine that it is something sacerdotal and sacramentarian. It is the outgoing towards Himself, in love and in life, of the soul which God has touched and which God inhabits. It is "the motion of a hidden fire," trembling in the breast, warming all the heart, consuming in its ardent flame the dross of our sins, cleansing and energising and transfiguring us until—miracle of miracles! —even we are heaven's fine and burnished gold.

We may fall just now immeasurably beneath the ideal which is painted in those sublime and searching chapters; but, if we are children in the household of the Lord, one thing is sure—we shall be smitten with the passion to reach it. And perhaps no one, on this side the New Jerusalem, has come nearer reaching it than the man who has delineated it here for us.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THERE is no question whatsoever that is of greater importance to mankind, and that it more concerns every individual person to be well resolved in, than this, *What are the distinguishing qualifications of those that are in favour with God, and entitled to His eternal rewards?* or, which comes to the same thing, *What is the nature of true religion? and wherein do lie the distinguishing notes of that virtue and holiness that is acceptable in the sight of God?* But though it be of such importance, and though we have clear and abundant light in the Word of God to direct us in this matter, yet there is no one point wherein professing Christians do more differ one from another. It would be endless to reckon up the variety of opinions, in this point, that divide the Christian world; making manifest the truth of that declaration of our Saviour, "*Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it.*"

The consideration of these things has long engaged me to attend to this matter, with the utmost diligence and care and exactness of search and inquiry that I have been capable of: it is a subject on which my mind has been peculiarly

intent, ever since I first entered on the study of divinity. But as to the success of my inquiries, it must be left to the judgment of the reader of the following treatise.

It is by the mixture of counterfeit religion with true, not discerned and distinguished, that the devil has had his greatest advantage against the cause and kingdom of Christ, all along, hitherto. It is plainly by this means, principally, that he has prevailed against all revivings of religion, that ever have been since the first founding of the Christian Church. By this, he hurt the cause of Christianity, in and after the apostolic age, much more than by all the persecutions of both Jews and heathens: the apostles, in all their epistles, show themselves much more concerned at the former mischief than the latter. By this, Satan prevailed against the Reformation, begun by Luther and Zwinglius, to put a stop to its progress and bring it into disgrace, ten times more, than by all those bloody, cruel, and before unheard-of persecutions of the Church of Rome. By this, principally, has he prevailed against revivals of religion that have been in our nation since the Reformation. By this he prevailed against New England, to quench the love and spoil the joy of her espousals, about a hundred years ago. And I think I have had opportunity enough to see plainly that by this the devil has prevailed against the late great revival of religion in New England, so happy and promising in its beginning. Here most evidently has been the main advantage

Satan has had against us; by this he has foiled us: it is by this means that the daughter of Zion in this land now lies on the ground, in such piteous circumstances as we now behold her; with her garments rent, her face disfigured, her nakedness exposed, her limbs broken, and weltering in the blood of her own wounds, and in no wise able to arise; and this, so quickly after her late great joys and hopes. "*Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her: the Lord hath commanded concerning Jacob, that his adversaries will be round about him.*"

I have seen the devil prevail the same way against two great revivings of religion in this country. Satan goes on with mankind, as he began with them. He prevailed against our first parents, and cast them out of Paradise, and suddenly brought all their happiness and glory to an end, by appearing to be a friend to their happy paradisaic state, and pretending to advance it to higher degrees. So the same cunning serpent that beguiled Eve through his subtlety, by perverting us from the simplicity that is in Christ, hath suddenly prevailed to deprive us of that fair prospect we had a little while ago, of a kind of paradisaic state of the Church of God in New England.

After religion has revived in the Church of God, and enemies appear, people that are engaged to defend its cause are commonly most exposed where they are least sensible of danger. While they are wholly intent upon the opposition that appears

openly before them, to make head against that, and do neglect carefully to look all around them, the devil comes behind them and gives a fatal stab unseen; and has opportunity to give a more home stroke, and wound the deeper, because he strikes at his leisure and according to his pleasure, being obstructed by no guard or resistance.

And so it is likely ever to be in the Church, whenever religion revives remarkably, till we have learned well to distinguish between true and false religion, between saving affections and experiences and those manifold fair shows and glistering appearances by which they are counterfeited. By this means the devil gratifies himself, by bringing it to pass that that should be offered to God by multitudes, under a notion of a pleasing acceptable service to Him, that is indeed above all things abominable to Him. By this means he deceives great multitudes about the state of their souls, making them think they are something when they are nothing; and so eternally undoes them: and not only so, but establishes many in a strong confidence of their eminent holiness, who are in God's sight some of the vilest of hypocrites. By this means he many ways damps and wounds religion in the hearts of the saints, obscures and deforms it by corrupt mixtures, causes their religious affection wofully to degenerate, and sometimes for a considerable time to be like the manna that bred worms and stank; and dreadfully ensnares and confounds the minds of others of the

saints, and brings them into great difficulties and temptations, and entangles them in a wilderness out of which they can by no means extricate themselves. By this means Satan mightily encourages the hearts of open enemies of religion, and strengthens their hands and fills them with weapons, and makes strong their fortresses: when, at the same time, religion and the Church of God lie exposed to them, as a city without walls. By this means he brings it to pass, that men work wickedness under a notion of doing God service, and so sin without restraint, yea, with earnest forwardness and zeal and with all their might. By this means he brings in even the friends of religion, insensibly to themselves, to do the work of enemies, by destroying religion in a far more effectual manner than open enemies can do, under a notion of advancing it. By this means the devil scatters the flock of Christ, and sets them one against another, and that with great heat of spirit, under a notion of zeal for God; and religion, by degrees, degenerates into vain jangling; and during the strife Satan leads both parties far out of the right way, driving each to great extremes, one on the right hand and the other on the left, according as he finds they are most inclined, or most easily moved and swayed, till the right path in the middle is almost wholly neglected.

And in the midst of this confusion, the devil has great opportunity to advance his own interest, and make it strong in ways innumerable, and get the

government of all into his own hands, and work his own will. And by what is seen of the terrible consequences of this counterfeit religion, when not distinguished from true religion, God's people in general have their minds unhinged and unsettled, and know not where to set their foot or what to think or do; and many are brought into doubts whether there be anything at all in religion; and heresy and infidelity and atheism greatly prevail.

Therefore it greatly concerns us to use our utmost endeavours clearly to discern, and have it well settled and established, wherein true religion does consist. Till this be done, it may be expected that great revivings of religion will be but of short continuance. Till this be done, there is but little good to be expected of all our warm debates, in conversation and from the press, not knowing clearly and distinctly what we ought to contend for.

My design is to contribute my mite, and use my best (however feeble) endeavours to this end, in the ensuing treatise: wherein it must be noted that my design is somewhat diverse from the design of what I have formerly published, which was to show *the distinguishing marks of a work of the Spirit of God*, including both His common and saving operations. But what I aim at now is to show the nature and signs of the *gracious operations* of God's Spirit, by which they are to be distinguished from all things whatsoever that the minds of men are the subjects of, which are not of a saving nature.

If I have succeeded in this my aim, in any tolerable measure, I hope it will tend to promote the interest of religion. And whether I have succeeded to bring any light to this subject or no, and however my attempt may be reproached in these captious censorious times, I hope in the mercy of a gracious and righteous God for the acceptance of the sincerity of my endeavours; and hope also for the candour and prayers of the true followers of the meek and charitable Lamb of God.

THE RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS

PART I

CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THE AFFECTIONS, AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN RELIGION.

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—1 PETER i. 8.

IN these words the apostle represents the state of the minds of the Christians he wrote to, under the persecutions they were then the subjects of. These persecutions are what he has respect to in the two preceding verses, when he speaks of the trial of their faith, and of their being in heaviness through manifold temptations.

Such trials are of threefold benefit to true religion. Hereby the truth of it is manifested, and it appears to be indeed true religion. They, above all other things, have a tendency to dis-

tinguish between true religion and false, and to cause the difference between them evidently to appear. Hence they are called by the name of *trials*: they try the faith and religion of professors, of what sort it is, as apparent gold is tried in the fire and manifested, whether it be true gold or no. And the faith of true Christians, being thus tried and proved to be true, is *found to praise and honour and glory.*

And then, these trials are of further benefit to true religion. They not only manifest the truth of it, but they make its genuine beauty and amiableness remarkably to appear. True virtue never appears so lovely as when it is most oppressed: and the divine excellency of real Christianity is never exhibited with such advantage as when under the greatest trials. Then it is that true faith appears much more precious than gold.

And, again, another benefit that such trials are of to true religion, is that they purify and increase it. They not only manifest it to be true, but also tend to refine it, and deliver it from those mixtures of what is false which encumber and impede it; that nothing may be left but what is true. They tend to increase its beauty, by establishing and confirming it, and making it more lively and vigorous, and purifying it from those things that obscured its lustre and glory. As gold that is tried in the fire is purged from its alloy and all remainders of dross, and comes forth more solid and beautiful; so true faith, being tried

as gold is tried in the fire, becomes more precious.

There were two kinds of operation, or exercise of true religion, in the Christians he wrote to, under their sufferings, that the apostle takes notice of in the text, wherein these benefits appeared.

1. Love to Christ: "*Whom having not seen, ye love.*" The world was ready to wonder what strange principle it was that influenced them to expose themselves to so great sufferings, to forsake the things that were seen, and renounce all that was dear and pleasant which was the object of sense. They seemed to the men of the world about them, as though they were beside themselves, and to act as though they hated themselves. There was nothing in their view that could induce them thus to suffer, and support them under and carry them through such trials. But although there was nothing that was seen, nothing that the world saw, or that the Christians themselves ever saw with their bodily eyes, that thus influenced and supported them, yet they had a supernatural principle of love to something unseen. They loved Jesus Christ, for they saw Him spiritually whom the world saw not, and whom they themselves had never seen with bodily eyes.

2. Joy in Christ. Though their outward sufferings were very grievous, yet their inward spiritual joys

were greater than their sufferings; and these supported them and enabled them to suffer with cheerfulness.

There are two things which the apostle takes notice of in the text concerning this joy. *First*: The manner in which it rises, the way in which Christ, though unseen, is the foundation of it, namely, by faith, which is the evidence of things not seen; "*In whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice.*"—*Secondly*: The nature of this joy; "*unspeakable, and full of glory.*" *Unspeakable* in the kind of it; very different from worldly joys, and carnal delights; of a vastly more pure, sublime, and heavenly nature, being something supernatural and truly divine and so ineffably excellent; the sublimity and exquisite sweetness of which there were no words to set forth. *Unspeakable* also in degree; it pleasing God to give them this holy joy with a liberal hand, and in large measure, in their state of persecution.

Their joy was *full of glory.* Although the joy was unspeakable, and no words were sufficient to describe it, yet something might be said of it, and no words more fit to represent its excellency than these, that it was full of glory; or, as it is in the original, *glorified joy.* In rejoicing with this joy, their minds were filled, as it were, with a glorious brightness, and their natures exalted and perfected. It was a most worthy, noble rejoicing, that did not corrupt and debase the mind, as many carnal joys do; but did greatly beautify and dignify it.

It was a prelibation of the joy of heaven, that raised their minds to a degree of heavenly blessedness. It filled their minds with the light of God's glory, and made themselves to shine with some communication of that glory.

Hence the proposition or doctrine, that I would raise from these words is this:

True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections.

We see that the apostle singles out the religious affections of love and joy. These are the exercises he takes notice of, wherein religion did appear true and pure and in its proper glory.—Here I would

I. Show what is intended by the affections;

II. Observe some things which make it evident, that a great part of true religion lies in the affections.

I. It may be enquired, what the affections of the mind are.

I answer, The affections are no other than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul.

God has endued the soul with two faculties. One is that by which it is capable of perception and speculation, or by which it discerns and views and judges of things; which is called the understanding. The other faculty is that by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is some way inclined with respect to the things it

views or considers; either is inclined *to* them, or is disinclined and averse *from* them: or is the faculty by which the soul does not behold things as an indifferent unaffected spectator, but either as liking or disliking, pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting. This faculty is called by various names. It is sometimes called *the Inclination*: and, as it has respect to the actions that are determined and governed by it, is called *the Will*: and the mind, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, is often called *the Heart.*

As the exercises of the inclination and will of the soul are various in their kinds, so they are much more various in their degrees. There are some exercises of pleasedness or displeasedness, inclination or disinclination, wherein the soul is carried but a little beyond a state of perfect indifference. And there are other degrees above this, wherein the approbation or dislike, pleasedness or aversion, is stronger; wherein we may rise higher and higher, till the soul comes to act vigorously and sensibly, and the actings of the soul are with that strength, that (through the laws of the union which the Creator has fixed between soul and body) the motion of the blood and animal spirits begin to be sensibly altered; whence oftentimes arises some bodily sensation, especially about the heart and vitals, that are the fountain of the fluids of the body. From whence it comes to pass that the mind, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, perhaps in all nations and ages, is called *the Heart.*

And it is to be noted that they are these more vigorous and sensible exercises of this faculty, that are called *the Affections.*

The will, and the affections of the soul, are not two faculties. The affections are not essentially distinct from the will, nor do they differ from the mere actings of the will and inclinations of the soul, but only in the liveliness and sensibleness of exercise.

It must be confessed that language is here somewhat imperfect, and the meaning of words in a considerable measure loose and unfixed, and not precisely limited by custom. In some sense, the affection of the soul differs nothing at all from the will and inclination, and the will never is in any exercise any further than it is affected; it is not moved out of a state of perfect indifference, any otherwise than as it is affected one way or other. In every act of the will whatsoever, the soul either likes or dislikes, is either inclined or disinclined to what is in view. These actings are not essentially different from those affections of love and hatred. That liking or inclination of the soul to a thing, if it be in a high degree, and be vigorous and lively, is the very same thing with the affection of love. And that disliking and disinclining, if in a great degree, is the very same with hatred. In every act of the will for or towards something not present, the soul is in some degree inclined to that thing; and that inclination, if in a considerable degree, is the very same with the

affection of desire. And in every degree of the act of the will, wherein the soul approves of something present, there is a degree of pleasedness; and that pleasedness, if it be in a considerable degree, is the very same with the affection of joy or delight. And if the will disapproves of what is present, the soul is in some degree displeased, and if that displeasedness be great, it is the very same with the affection of grief or sorrow.

Such seems to be our nature, and such the laws of the union of soul and body, that there never are any lively and vigorous exercises of the will or inclination of the soul, without some effect upon the body, in some alteration of the motion of its fluids and especially of the animal spirits. And, on the other hand, from the same laws of the union of soul and body, the constitution of the body and the motion of its fluids may promote the exercise of the affections. But yet it is not the body, but the mind only, that is the proper seat of the affections. The body of man is no more capable of being really the subject of love or hatred, joy or sorrow, fear or hope, than the body of a tree, or than the same body of a man is capable of thinking and understanding. As it is the soul only that has ideas, so it is the soul only that is pleased or displeased with its ideas. As it is the soul only that thinks, so it is the soul only that loves or hates, rejoices or is grieved at what it thinks of. An unbodied spirit may be as capable of love and hatred, joy or sorrow, hope or

fear, or other affections, as one that is united to a body.

The affections and passions are frequently spoken of as the same. And yet, in the more common use of speech, there is in some respect a difference; and affection is a word that, in its ordinary signification, seems to be something more extensive than passion, being used for all vigorous lively actings of the will or inclination; but passion for those that are more sudden, and whose effects on the animal spirits are more violent, and the mind more overpowered and less in its own command.

As all the exercises of the inclination and will are either in approving and liking, or disapproving and rejecting; so the affections are of two sorts. They are those by which the soul is carried out to what is in view, cleaving to it, or seeking it; or those by which it is averse from it, and opposes it.

Of the former sort are love, desire, hope, joy, gratitude, complacence. Of the latter kind are hatred, fear, anger, grief, and such like.

And there are some affections wherein there is a composition of each; as in the affection of *pity* there is something of the former kind towards the person suffering, and something of the latter towards what he suffers. And so in *zeal*, there is in it high approbation of some person or thing, together with vigorous opposition to what is conceived to be contrary to it.

There are other mixed affections that might be also mentioned, but I hasten to

II. The second thing proposed, which was, To observe some things that render it evident that true religion, in great part, consists in the affections. And here,

1. What has been said of the nature of the affections makes this evident, and may be sufficient without adding anything further to put this matter out of doubt. For who will deny that true religion consists, in a great measure, in vigorous and lively actings of the inclination and will of the soul, or the fervent exercises of the heart?

That religion which God requires, and will accept, does not consist in weak, dull, and lifeless wouldings, raising us but a little above a state of indifference. God, in His Word, greatly insists upon it, that we be in good earnest, fervent in spirit, and our hearts vigorously engaged in religion.

If we be not in good earnest in religion, and our wills and inclinations be not strongly exercised, we are nothing. The things of religion are so great, that there can be no suitableness in the exercises of our hearts to their nature and importance, unless they be lively and powerful. In nothing is vigour in the actings of our inclinations so requisite as in religion; and in nothing is lukewarmness so odious. True religion is evermore a powerful thing; and the power of it appears, in the first place, in the inward exercises of it in the heart, where is the

principal and original seat of it. Hence true religion is called the *power of godliness*, in distinction from the external appearances of it, that are the *form* of it. The Spirit of God, in those that have sound and solid religion, is a spirit of powerful holy affection; and therefore, God is said to have given them *the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.* And such, when they receive the Spirit of God in His sanctifying and saving influences, are said to be *baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire*; by reason of the power and fervour of those exercises the Spirit of God excites in their hearts, whereby their hearts, when grace is in exercise, may be said to *burn within them.*

The business of religion is, from time to time, compared to those exercises wherein men are wont to have their hearts and strength greatly exercised and engaged; such as running, wrestling or agonizing for a great prize or crown, and fighting with strong enemies that seek our lives, and warring as those that by violence take a city or kingdom.

And though true grace has various degrees, and there are some that are but babes in Christ, in whom the exercise of the inclination and will towards divine and heavenly things is comparatively weak; yet everyone that has the power of godliness in his heart has his inclinations and heart exercised towards God and divine things, with such strength and vigour that these holy exercises do

prevail in him above all carnal or natural affections, and are effectual to overcome them. For every true disciple of Christ loves Him above father or mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, houses and lands; yea, than his own life.

2. The Author of the human nature has not only given affections to men, but has made them very much the spring of men's actions. As the affections do not only necessarily belong to the human nature, but are a very great part of it; so (inasmuch as by regeneration persons are renewed in the whole man, and sanctified throughout) holy affections do not only necessarily belong to true religion, but are a very great part of that. And as true religion is of a practical nature, and God hath so constituted the human nature that the affections are very much the spring of men's actions, this also shows that true religion must consist very much in the affections.

Such is man's nature that he is very inactive, any otherwise than he is influenced by some affection, either love or hatred, desire, hope, fear, or some other. We see the world of mankind to be exceeding busy and active; and the affections of men are the springs of the motion. Take away all love and hatred, all hope and fear, all anger, zeal, and affectionate desire, and the world would be, in a great measure, motionless and dead; there would be no such thing as activity amongst mankind, or any earnest pursuit whatsoever. It is affection that engages the covetous man, and him that is

greedy of worldly profits, in his pursuits; and it is by the affections that the ambitious man is put forward in his pursuit of worldly glory; and it is the affections also that actuate the voluptuous man in his pursuit of pleasure and sensual delights. The world continues, from age to age, in a continual commotion and agitation, in a pursuit of these things; but take away all affection, and the spring of all this motion would be gone, and the motion itself would cease. So in religious matters the spring of men's actions is very much religious affections. He that has doctrinal knowledge and speculation only, without affection, never is engaged in the business of religion.

3. Nothing is more manifest in fact, than that the things of religion take hold of men's souls no further than they affect them. There are multitudes that often hear the Word of God, and therein hear of those things that are infinitely great and important, and that most nearly concern them, and all that is heard seems to be wholly ineffectual upon them, and to make no alteration in their disposition or behaviour; and the reason is, they are not affected with what they hear. There are many that often hear of the glorious perfections of God, His almighty power and boundless wisdom, His infinite majesty, and that holiness of God, by which He is *of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity,* and *the heavens are not pure in His sight,* and of God's infinite goodness and mercy; they hear particularly of the unspeakable love of

God and Christ, and of the great things that Christ has done and suffered, and of the great things of another world, of eternal misery in bearing the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, and of endless blessedness and glory in the presence of God and the enjoyment of His dear love; they also hear the peremptory commands of God, and His gracious counsels and warnings, and the sweet invitations of the Gospel; I say, they often hear these things, and yet remain as they were before, with no sensible alteration on them, either in heart or practice, because they are not affected with what they hear; and ever will be so till they are affected.

I am bold to assert, that there never was any considerable change wrought in the mind or conversation of any one person, by anything of a religious nature that ever he read, heard, or saw, who had not his affections moved. Never was a natural man engaged earnestly to seek his salvation; never were any such brought to cry after wisdom and lift up their voice for understanding, and to wrestle with God in prayer for mercy; and never was one humbled and brought to the foot of God, from anything that ever he heard or imagined of his own unworthiness and deservings of God's displeasure; nor was ever one induced to fly for refuge unto Christ, while his heart remained unaffected. Nor was there ever a saint awakened out of a cold lifeless frame, or recovered from a declining state in religion, and brought back from

a lamentable departure from God, without having his heart affected.

4. The Holy Scriptures do everywhere place religion very much in the affections; such as fear, hope, love, hatred, desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion, and zeal.

The Scriptures place much of religion in *godly fear*; insomuch that it is often spoken of as the character of those that are truly religious persons, that they *tremble at God's Word*, that they *fear before Him*, that their *flesh trembles for fear of Him*, and that they are *afraid of His judgments*, that *His excellency makes them afraid*, and His dread falls upon them, and the like: and a compellation commonly given the saints in Scripture, is, *fearers of God*, or *they that fear the Lord*. And because the fear of God is a great part of true godliness, hence true godliness, in general, is very commonly called by the name of *the fear of God*; as everyone knows, that knows anything of the Bible.

So *hope* in God and in the promises of His Word is often spoken of in the Scripture, as a very considerable part of true religion. Religious fear and hope are joined together, as jointly constituting the character of the true saints. "*Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.*" Hope is so great a part of true religion, that the apostle says, "*We are saved by hope.*" And this is spoken of as *the helmet* of the Christian soldier, and *the sure and steadfast anchor of the soul,*

which preserves it from being cast away by the storms of this evil world.

The Scriptures place religion very much in the affection of *love,* in love to God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and love to the people of God, and to mankind. The texts, in which this is manifest, both in the Old Testament and New, are innumerable. But of this more afterwards.

The contrary affection of *hatred* also, as having sin for its object, is spoken of in Scripture as no inconsiderable part of true religion. It is spoken of as that by which true religion may be known and distinguished. "*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.*" And accordingly, the saints are called upon to give evidence of their sincerity by this, "*Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.*" And the Psalmist often mentions it as an evidence of his sincerity. "*I hate the work of them that turn aside; I hate every false way. Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?*"

So *holy desire,* exercised in longings, hungerings, and thirstings after God and holiness, is often mentioned in Scripture as an important part of true religion. "*The desire of our soul is to thy name and to the remembrance of thee*"; "*One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.*" Such a holy desire and thirst of soul is mentioned, as one of those great things which renders or denotes a man truly blessed, in the beginning of Christ's Sermon on the Mount: "*Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall*

be filled." And this holy thirst is spoken of, as a great thing in the condition of a participation of the blessings of eternal life: "*I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*"

The Scriptures speak of *holy joy*, as a great part of true religion. So it is represented in the text. And as an important part of religion, it is often exhorted to, and pressed with great earnestness. "*Delight thyself in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*" This is mentioned among the principal fruits of the Spirit of grace: "*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy.*"

Religious *sorrow, mourning*, and *brokenness of heart*, are also frequently spoken of as a great part of true religion. These things are mentioned as distinguishing qualities of the true saints, and a great part of their character. "*Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted*"; "*The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart: and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*" This godly sorrow and brokenness of heart is often spoken of, not only as a great thing in the saints, but that in them which is peculiarly acceptable and pleasing to God: "*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*"

Another affection often mentioned, as that in the exercise of which much of true religion appears, is *gratitude*; especially as exercised in thankfulness and praise to God. This being so much spoken of in the Book of Psalms, and other parts of the Holy Scriptures, I need not mention particular texts.

Again, the Holy Scriptures do frequently speak of *compassion or mercy*, as a very great and essential thing in true religion; insomuch that good men are in Scripture denominated from hence; and a merciful man and a good man are equivalent terms in Scripture. "*The righteous man perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away.*" And the Scripture chooses out this quality, as that by which, in a peculiar manner, a righteous man is deciphered. "*The righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.*" And this Christ also speaks of, as one of the weightier matters of the law: "*Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.*" To the same purpose is that in Hosea: "*For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice.*" Which seems to have been a text much delighted in by our Saviour, by His manner of citing it once and again.

Zeal is also spoken of as a very essential part of the religion of true saints. It is a great thing Christ had in view, in giving Himself for our redemption: "*Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*" And this is the great thing wanting in the lukewarm Laodiceans.

I have mentioned but a few texts, out of an innumerable multitude, all over the Scripture, which place religion very much in the affections.

But what has been observed may be sufficient to show that they who would deny that much of true religion lies in the affections, and maintain the contrary, must throw away what we have been wont to own for our Bible, and get some other rule by which to judge of the nature of religion.

5. The Scriptures do represent true religion, as being summarily comprehended in Love, the chief of the affections and fountain of all other affections.

So our blessed Saviour represents the matter, in answer to the lawyer who asked Him which was the great commandment of the law. And the Apostle Paul does from time to time make the same representation. "*He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law*"; "*Love is the fulfilling of the law*" "*For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" So the same apostle speaks of love as the greatest thing in religion, and as the vitals, essence, and soul of it; without which the greatest knowledge and gifts, and the most glaring profession, and everything else which appertains to religion, are vain and worthless; and represents it as the fountain from whence proceeds all that is good, in 1 Cor. xiii. throughout; for that which is there rendered *charity* in the original is ἀγαπη, the proper English of which is *love*.

Now, although it be true that the love thus spoken of includes the whole of a sincerely benevolent propensity of the soul towards God and man; yet it is evident from what has been before observed, that this propensity or inclination of the

soul, when in sensible and vigorous exercise, becomes affection and is no other than affectionate love. And surely it is such vigorous and fervent love which Christ speaks of as the sum of all religion, when He speaks of loving *God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our minds,* and *our neighbour as ourselves.*

Indeed it cannot be supposed, when this affection of love is spoken of as the sum of all religion, that hereby is meant the act, exclusive of the habit, or that the exercise of the understanding is excluded which is implied in all reasonable affection. But it is doubtless true, and evident from these Scriptures, that the essence of all true religion lies in holy love; and that in this divine affection, and a habitual disposition to it, and that light which is the foundation of it, and those things which are the fruits of it, consists the whole of religion.

From hence it clearly and certainly appears, that great part of true religion consists in the affections. For love is not only one of the affections, but it is the first and chief of the affections, and the fountain of all the affections. From a vigorous, affectionate, and fervent love to God, will necessarily arise other religious affections. Hence will arise an intense hatred and abhorrence of sin, fear of sin, and a dread of God's displeasure, gratitude to God for His goodness, complacence and joy in God when God is graciously and sensibly present, and grief when He is absent, and a joyful

hope when a future enjoyment of God is expected, and fervent zeal for the glory of God. And in like manner, from a fervent love to men, will arise all other virtuous affections towards men.

6. The religion of the most eminent saints we have an account of in the Scripture consisted much in holy affections.

I shall take particular notice of three eminent saints, who have expressed the frame and sentiments of their own hearts, and so described their own religion and the manner of their intercourse with God, in the writings which they have left us that are a part of the sacred canon.

The first instance I shall take notice of, is David, that man after God's own heart; who has given us a lively portraiture of his religion in the Book of Psalms. Those holy songs of his he has there left us are nothing else but the expressions and breathings of devout and holy affections: such as a humble and fervent love to God, admiration of His glorious perfections and wonderful works, earnest thirstings and pantings of soul after God, delight and joy in God, a sweet and melting gratitude to God for His great goodness, an holy exultation and triumph of soul in the favour, sufficiency, and faithfulness of God, his love to and delight in the saints, the excellent of the earth, his great delight in the Word and ordinances of God, his grief for his own and others' sins, and his fervent zeal for God, and against the enemies of God and His Church. And these expressions of holy affection,

which the Psalms of David are everywhere full of, are the more to our present purpose, because those psalms are not only the expressions of the religion of so eminent a saint, but were also, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, penned for the use of the Church of God in its public worship, not only in that age but in after ages; as being fitted to express the religion of all saints, in all ages, as well as the religion of the psalmist.

Another instance I shall observe, is the Apostle Paul; who was in many respects the chief of all the ministers of the New Testament, and (as has been not improbably thought by some) the most eminent servant of Christ that ever lived, received to the highest rewards in the heavenly kingdom of his Master. By what is said of him in the Scripture, he appears to have been a person that was full of affection. And it is very manifest that the religion he expresses in his Epistles consisted very much in holy affections. It appears by all his expressions of himself, that he was, in the course of his life, inflamed, actuated, and entirely swallowed up, by a most ardent love to his glorious Lord, esteeming *all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of* Him, and esteeming them *but dung that he might win* Him. He represents himself as overpowered by this holy affection, and as it were compelled by it to go forward in his service through all difficulties and sufferings (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). And his Epistles are full of expressions of an overflowing affection towards the people of

Christ: he speaks of his dear love to them, of his abundant love, and of his affectionate and tender love, as of *a nurse towards her children.* So he speaks of his *earnest care* for others, and of his *bowels of pity,* or mercy, towards them; and of his concern for others, even to anguish of heart. He speaks of *the great conflict of his soul* for them. He speaks of *great and continual grief* that he had in his heart from compassion to the Jews. He speaks of his *mouth's being opened,* and his *heart enlarged* towards Christians. He often speaks of his affectionate and longing desires. The same apostle is very often, in his Epistles, expressing the affection of *joy,* the affection of *hope,* and the affection of *godly jealousy.* And it appears by his whole history, after his conversion, in the Acts, and also by all his Epistles and the accounts he gives of himself there, that the affection of *zeal,* as having the cause of his Master, and the interest and prosperity of His Church, for its object, was mighty in him, continually inflaming his heart, strongly engaging to those great and constant labours he went through, in instructing, exhorting, warning, and reproving others, *travailing in birth with them*; conflicting with those powerful and innumerable enemies who continually opposed him, *wrestling with principalities and powers, not fighting as one who beats the air, running the race set before him,* continually pressing forward through all manner of difficulties and sufferings; so that others thought him quite beside himself. And

how full he was of affection, does further appear by his being so full of tears: he speaks of his *many tears*, and of his tears that he *shed continually, night and day*.

Now, anyone who can consider these accounts given in the Scripture of this great apostle, and yet not see that his religion consisted much in affection, must have a strange faculty of managing his eyes, to shut out the light which shines most full in his face.

The other instance I shall mention, is of the Apostle John, that beloved disciple, who was the nearest and dearest to his Master of any of the twelve, and was by Him admitted to the greatest privileges of any of them; being favoured above all in leaning on his Master's bosom at His last supper, and in being chosen as the disciple to whom He would reveal His wonderful dispensations towards His Church to the end of time, and to shut up the canon of the New Testament and of the whole Scripture; being preserved much longer than all the rest of the apostles, to set all things in order in the Christian Church after their death.

It is evident by all his writings (as is generally observed by divines), that he was a person remarkably full of affection: his addresses to those whom he wrote to being inexpressibly tender and pathetical, breathing nothing but the most fervent love; as though he were all made up of sweet and holy affection. The proofs of which cannot be

given without disadvantage, unless we should transcribe his whole writings.

7. He whom God sent into the world, to be the Light of the world, and Head of the whole Church, and the perfect example of true religion and virtue, for the imitation of all—the Shepherd whom the whole flock should follow wherever He goes—even the Lord Jesus Christ, was a Person who was remarkably of a tender and affectionate heart; and His virtue was expressed very much in the exercise of holy affections. He was the greatest instance of ardency, vigour, and strength of love, to both God and man, that ever was. It was these affections which got the victory, in that mighty struggle and conflict, in His agonies, when He *prayed more earnestly, and offered up strong crying and tears,* and wrestled in tears and in blood. Such was the power of the exercises of His holy love that they were stronger than death, and in that great struggle overcame those strong exercises of the natural affections of fear and grief, when He was sore amazed, and His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. And He also appeared to be full of affection in the course of His life. We read of His great zeal. We read of His grief for the sins of men. We read of His earnest desire. "*With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.*" We often read of the affection of pity or compassion in Christ. How tender did His heart appear to be, on occasion of Mary's and Martha's mourning for their brother, and coming

to Him with their complaints and tears! Their tears soon drew tears from His eyes. And how ineffably affectionate was the last and dying discourse, which Jesus had with His eleven disciples the evening before He was crucified; when He told them He was going away; and foretold them the great difficulties and sufferings they should meet with in the world when He was gone; and comforted and counselled them, as His little dear children; and bequeathed to them His Holy Spirit, and therein His peace and His comfort and joy, as it were in His last will and testament; and concluded the whole with that affectionate intercessory prayer for them and His whole Church! Of all the discourses ever penned or uttered by the mouth of any man, this seems to be the most affectionate and affecting.

8. The religion of heaven consists very much in affection.

According to the Scripture representation of the heavenly state, the religion of heaven consists chiefly in holy and mighty love and joy, and the expression of these in most fervent and exalted praises. Now, it would be very foolish to pretend that, because the saints in heaven be not united to flesh and blood, and have no animal fluids to be moved (through the laws of union of soul and body) with those great emotions of their souls, therefore their exceeding love and joy are no affections. We are not speaking of the affections of the body, but of the affections of the soul, the chief of which are *love* and *joy*. When these are

in the soul, whether that be in the body or out of it, the soul is affected and moved. And when they are in the soul, in that strength in which they are in the saints in heaven, the soul is mightily affected and moved, or, which is the same thing, has great affections. It is true, we do not experimentally know what love and joy are in a soul out of a body, or in a glorified body; we have not had experience of love and joy in a soul in these circumstances; but the saints on earth do know what divine love and joy in the soul are, and they know that love and joy are of the same kind with the love and joy which are in heaven in separate souls there.

The love and joy of the saints on earth is the beginning and dawning of the light, life, and blessedness of heaven, and is like their love and joy there; or, rather, the same in nature, though not the same with it, or like to it, in degree and circumstances. This is evident by many Scriptures. There is a sensation of the mind which loves and rejoices, that is antecedent to any effects on the fluids of the body; and this sensation of the mind, therefore, does not depend on these motions in the body, and so may be in the soul without the body. And wherever there are the exercises of love and joy, there is that sensation of the mind, whether it be in the body or out; and that inward sensation, or kind of spiritual sense or feeling, and motion of the soul, is what is called affection: the soul when it thus feels (if I may so say), and is thus moved, is said to be affected, and especially

when this inward sensation and motion are to a very high degree, as they are in the saints in heaven.

If we can learn anything of the state of heaven from the Scripture, the love and joy that the saints have there is exceeding great and vigorous; impressing their hearts with the strongest and most lively sensation of inexpressible sweetness, mightily moving, animating, and engaging them, making them like to a flame of fire. And if such love and joy be not affections, then the word *affection* is of no use in language. Will any say that the saints in heaven, in beholding the face of their Father and the glory of their Redeemer, and contemplating His wonderful works, and particularly His laying down His life for them, have their hearts nothing moved and affected by all which they behold or consider?

Hence, therefore, the religion of heaven, consisting chiefly in holy love and joy, consists very much in affection: and, therefore, undoubtedly, true religion consists very much in affection. The way to learn the true nature of anything is to go where that thing is to be found in its purity and perfection. If we would know the nature of true gold, we must view it not in the ore but when it is refined. If we would learn what true religion is, we must go where there is true religion, and nothing but true religion in its highest perfection without any defect or mixture. All who are truly religious are not of this world; they are strangers

here and belong to heaven; they are born from above, heaven is their native country; and the nature which they receive by this heavenly birth is an heavenly nature; they receive an anointing from above; that principle of true religion which is in them is communication of the religion of heaven; their grace is the dawn of glory; and God fits them for that world by conforming them to it.

9. This appears from the nature and design of the ordinances and duties which God hath appointed, as means and expressions of true religion.

To instance in the duty of prayer: It is manifest we are not appointed in this duty to declare God's perfections, His majesty, holiness, goodness, and all-sufficiency, and our own meanness, emptiness, dependence, and unworthiness, and our wants and desires, to inform God of these things, or to incline His heart and prevail with Him to be willing to show us mercy; but suitably to affect our own hearts with the things we express, and so to prepare us to receive the blessings we ask.

And the duty of singing praises to God seems to be appointed wholly to excite and express religious affections. No other reason can be assigned, why we should express ourselves to God in verse rather than in prose, and do it with music, but only that such is our nature and frame that these things have a tendency to move our affections.

The same thing appears in the nature and design

of the sacraments which God hath appointed. God, considering our frame, hath not only appointed that we should be told of the great things of the Gospel and of the redemption of Christ, and instructed in them by His Word; but also, that they should be, as it were, exhibited to our view, in sensible representations in the sacraments, the more to affect us with them.

And the impressing divine things on the hearts and affections of men is evidently one great and main end, for which God has ordained that His Word delivered in the Holy Scriptures should be opened, applied, and set home upon men, in preaching. And therefore it does not answer the aim which God had in His institution, merely for men to have good commentaries and expositions on the Scripture, and other good books of divinity; because, although these may tend, as well as preaching, to give men a good doctrinal or speculative understanding of the things of the Word of God, yet they have not an equal tendency to impress them on men's hearts and affections. God hath appointed a particular and lively application of His Word to men, in the preaching of it, as a fit means to affect sinners with the importance of the things of religion, and their own misery and necessity of a remedy, and the glory and sufficiency of a remedy provided; and to stir up the pure minds of the saints, and quicken their affections, by often bringing the great things of religion to their remembrance, and setting them before them

in their proper colours, though they know them and have been fully instructed in them already. And particularly, to promote those two affections in them—love and joy.

10. It is an evidence that true religion, or holiness of heart, lies very much in the affection of the heart, that the Scriptures place the sin of the heart very much in hardness of heart. This they do everywhere. It was hardness of heart which excited grief and displeasure in Christ towards the Jews. He *looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.* It is from men's having such a heart as this, that they *treasure up wrath* for themselves. The reason given why the house of Israel would not obey God, was, that they were *hardhearted.* The wickedness of that perverse rebellious generation in the wilderness is ascribed to the hardness of their hearts. God's leaving men to the power of the sin and corruption of the heart, is often expressed by *God's hardening their hearts.* And the apostle seems to speak of an *evil heart that departs from the living God,* and *a hard heart,* as the same thing. And that great work of God in conversion, which consists in delivering a person from the powers of sin, and mortifying corruption, is expressed, once and again, by God's *taking away the heart of stone and giving an heart of flesh.*

Now, by a hard heart is plainly meant an unaffected heart, or a heart not easy to be moved with virtuous affections, like a stone, insensible,

stupid, unmoved, and hard to be impressed. Hence the hard heart is called a *stony heart*, and is opposed to an heart of flesh, that has feeling and is sensibly touched and moved. We read in Scripture of a hard heart and a tender heart; and doubtless we are to understand these as contrary the one to the other. But what is a tender heart but a heart which is easily impressed with what ought to affect it? God commends Josiah, because his *heart was tender*. And this is one thing, wherein it is necessary we should become as little children, in order to our entering into the kingdom of God, even that we should have our hearts tender and easily affected and moved in spiritual and divine things, as little children have in other things.

Now therefore, since it is so plain that by a hard heart, in Scripture, is meant a heart destitute of pious affections, and since also the Scriptures do so frequently place the sin and corruption of the heart in hardness of heart; it is evident that the grace and holiness of the heart, on the contrary, must in a great measure consist in its having pious affections, and being easily susceptive of such affection. Divines are generally agreed that sin radically and fundamentally consists in what is negative or privative, having its root and foundation in a privation or want of holiness. And therefore undoubtedly, if it be so that sin does very much consist in hardness of heart, and so in the want of pious affections of heart, holiness does consist very much in those pious affections.

I am far from supposing that all affections do show a tender heart. Hatred, anger, vain-glory, and other selfish and self-exalting affections, may greatly prevail in the hardest heart. But yet it is evident that hardness of heart and tenderness of heart are expressions that relate to the affections of the heart, and denote the heart's being susceptible of, or shut up against, certain affections.

Upon the whole, I think it clearly and abundantly evident that true religion lies very much in the affections. Not that I think these arguments prove that religion in the hearts of the truly godly is ever in exact proportion to the degree of affection and present emotion of the mind; for undoubtedly there is much affection in the true saints which is not spiritual; their religious affections are often mixed. All is not from grace, but much from nature. And though the affections have not their seat in the body, yet the constitution of the body may very much contribute to the present emotion of the mind. And the degree of religion is rather to be judged of by the fixedness and strength of the habit that is exercised in affection, whereby holy affection is habitual, than by the degree of the present exercise. And the strength of that habit is not always in proportion to outward effects and manifestations, or inward effects in the hurry and vehemence and sudden changes of the course of the thoughts of the mind. But yet it is evident that religion consists so much in affection, as that without holy affection there is no true religion.

And no light in the understanding is good which does not produce holy affection in the heart. No habit or principle in the heart is good which has no such exercise. No external fruit is good which does not proceed from such exercises.

Having thus considered the evidence of the proposition laid down, I proceed to some inferences.

1. We may hence learn how great their error is who are for discarding all religious affections, as having nothing solid or substantial in them.

There seems to be too much of a disposition this way prevailing in this land at this time. Because many who, in the late extraordinary season, appeared to have great religious affections did not manifest a right temper of mind, and ran into many errors in the time of their affection and the heat of their zeal; and because the high affections of so many seem to be so soon come to nothing, and some who seemed to be mightily raised and swallowed up with joy and zeal, for a while, have returned *like the dog to his vomit*: hence religious affections in general are grown out of credit with great numbers, as though true religion did not at all consist in them. Thus we easily and naturally run from one extreme to another.

A little while ago we were in the other extreme. If persons did but appear to be indeed very much moved and raised, so as to be full of religious talk, and to express themselves with great warmth and earnestness, and to be filled, or to be very full, as the phrases were; it was too much the manner,

without further examination, to conclude such persons were full of the Spirit of God, and had eminent experience of His gracious influences. This was the extreme which was prevailing three or four years ago. But of late, instead of esteeming and admiring all religious affections without distinction, it is a thing much more prevalent to reject and discard all without distinction.

Herein appears the subtlety of Satan. While he saw that affections were much in vogue, knowing the greater part of the land were not versed in such things, and had not had much experience of great religious affections to enable them to judge well of them and distinguish between true and false; then he knew he could best play his game by sowing tares amongst the wheat, and mingling false affections with the works of God's Spirit. He knew this to be a likely way to delude and eternally ruin many souls, and greatly to wound religion in the saints, and entangle them in a dreadful wilderness, and by and by to bring all religion into disrepute. But now, when the ill consequences of these false affections appear, and it is become very apparent that some of those emotions, which made a glaring show and were by many greatly admired, were in reality nothing; the devil sees it to be for his interest to go another way to work, and to endeavour to his utmost to propagate and establish a persuasion that all affections and sensible emotions of the mind, in things of religion, are nothing at all to be regarded,

but are rather to be avoided, and carefully guarded against, as things of a pernicious tendency. This he knows is the way to bring all religion to a mere lifeless formality, and effectually shut out the power of godliness and everything which is spiritual, and to have all true Christianity turned out of doors.

For, as there is no true religion where there is nothing else but affection, so there is no true religion where there is no religious affection. As, on the one hand, there must be light in the understanding as well as an affected fervent heart; where there is heat without light, there can be nothing divine or heavenly in that heart: so, on the other hand, where there is a kind of light without heat, a head stored with notions and speculations with a cold and unaffected heart, there can be nothing divine in that light—that knowledge is no true spiritual knowledge of divine things. If the great things of religion are rightly understood, they will affect the heart. The reason why men are not affected by such infinitely great, important, glorious, and wonderful things, as they often hear and read of in the Word of God, is undoubtedly because they are blind. If they were not so, it would be impossible, and utterly inconsistent with human nature, that their hearts should be otherwise than strongly impressed and greatly moved by such things.

This prevailing prejudice against religious affections is apparently of awful effect to harden

the hearts of sinners, and damp the graces of many of the saints, and stun the life and power of religion, and preclude the effect of ordinances, and hold us down in a state of dulness and apathy. It undoubtedly causes many persons greatly to offend God, in entertaining mean and low thoughts of the extraordinary work He has lately wrought in this land.

And for persons to despise and cry down all religious affections is the way to shut all religion out of their own hearts, and to make thorough work in ruining their souls.

They who condemn high affections in others are certainly not likely to have high affections themselves. And let it be considered that they who have but little religious affection have certainly but little religion. And they who condemn others for their religious affections, and have none themselves, have no religion.

There are false affections, and there are true. A man's having much affection does not prove that he has any true religion: but, if he has no affection, it proves that he has no true religion. The right way is not to reject all affections, nor to approve all; but to distinguish between affections, approving some and rejecting others; separating between the wheat and the chaff, the gold and the dross, the precious and the vile.

2. If it be so that true religion lies much in the affections, hence we may infer that such means are to be desired as have much of a tendency to move

the affections. Such books, and such a way of preaching the Word and administration of ordinances, and such a way of worshipping God in prayer and singing praises, are much to be desired, as have a tendency deeply to affect the hearts of those who attend these means.

Perhaps, formerly the generality (at least of the common people) were in the extreme of looking too much to an affectionate address in public performances: but now a very great part of the people seem to have gone far into a contrary extreme. Indeed there may be such means as may have a great tendency to stir up the passions of weak and ignorant persons, and yet have no great tendency to benefit their souls; for though they may have a tendency to excite affections, they may have little or none to excite gracious affections, or any affections tending to grace. But undoubtedly, if the things of religion in the means used are treated according to their nature and exhibited truly, so as tends to convey just apprehensions and a right judgment of them; the more they have a tendency to move the affections, the better.

3. If true religion lies much in the affections, hence we may learn what great cause we have to be ashamed and confounded before God, that we are no more affected with the great things of religion. It appears from what has been said that this arises from our having so little true religion.

God has given to mankind affections, for the same purpose which He has given all the faculties and principles of the human soul for, namely, that they might be subservient to man's chief end, and the great business for which God has created him, that is, the business of religion. And yet how common is it among mankind, that their affections are much more exercised and engaged in other matters than in religion! In things which concern men's worldly interest, their outward delights, their honour and reputation, and their natural relations, they have their desires eager, their appetites vehement, their love warm and affectionate, their zeal ardent. In these things their hearts are tender and sensible, easily moved, deeply impressed, much concerned, very sensibly affected, and greatly engaged; much depressed with grief at worldly losses, and highly raised with joy at worldly successes and prosperity.

But how insensible and unmoved are most men about the great things of another world! how dull are their affections! how heavy and hard their hearts in these matters! here their love is cold, their desires languid, their zeal low, and their gratitude small. How they can sit and hear of the infinite height and depth and length and breadth of the love of God in Christ Jesus, of His giving His infinitely dear Son to be offered up a sacrifice for the sins of men, and of the unparalleled love of the innocent, holy, and tender Lamb of God, manifested in His dying agonies, His bloody sweat, His

loud and bitter cries, and bleeding heart, and all this for enemies, to redeem them from deserved, eternal burnings, and to bring to unspeakable and everlasting joy and glory—and yet be cold and heavy, insensible and regardless! Where are the exercises of our affections proper, if not here? what is it that does more require them? and what can be a fit occasion of their lively and vigorous exercise, if not such an one as this? can anything be set in our view greater and more important? anything more wonderful and surprising, or more nearly concerning our interest? Can we suppose that the wise Creator implanted such principles in the human nature as the affections, to be of use to us and to be exercised on certain proper occasions, but to lie still on such an occasion as this? can any Christian, who believes the truth of these things, entertain such thoughts?

Is there anything which Christians can find in heaven or earth so worthy to be the objects of their admiration and love, their earnest and longing desires, their hope and their rejoicing, their fervent zeal, as those things that are held forth to us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ? in which, not only are things declared most worthy to affect us, but they are exhibited in the most affecting manner. The glory and beauty of the blessed Jehovah, which is most worthy in itself to be the object of our admiration and love, is there exhibited in the most affecting manner that can be conceived of, as it appears shining in all its lustre in the face of an

incarnate, infinitely loving, meek, compassionate, dying Redeemer. All the virtues of the Lamb of God—His humility, patience, meekness, submission, obedience, love, and compassion—are exhibited to our view, in a manner the most tending to move our affections of any that can be imagined; as they all had their greatest trial, and their highest exercise, and so their brightest manifestation, when He was in the most affecting circumstances; even when He was under His last sufferings—those unutterable and unparalleled sufferings He endured from His tender love and pity to us. There also, the hateful nature of our sins is manifested in the most affecting manner possible; as we see the dreadful effects of them in what our Redeemer, who undertook to answer for us, suffered for them. And there we have the most affecting manifestations of God's hatred to sin, and His wrath and justice in punishing it; as we see His justice in the strictness and inflexibleness of it, and His wrath in its terribleness, in so dreadfully punishing our sins in One who was infinitely dear to Him and loving to us.

So has God disposed things, in the affair of our redemption, and in His glorious dispensations revealed to us in the Gospel, as though everything were purposely contrived in such a manner as to have the greatest possible tendency to reach our hearts in the most tender part, and move our affections most sensibly and strongly. How great cause have we therefore to be humbled to the dust that we are no more affected!

3412

PART II

SHOWING WHAT ARE NO CERTAIN SIGNS THAT RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS ARE TRULY GRACIOUS, OR THAT THEY ARE NOT.

If anyone, on the reading of what has been just now said, is ready to acquit himself and say, "I am not one of those who have no religious affections, I am often greatly moved with the consideration of the great things of religion," let him not content himself with this, that he has religious affections. For, as we observed before, as we ought not to reject and condemn all affections as though true religion did not at all consist in affection; so, on the other hand, we ought not to approve of all, as though everyone that was religiously affected had true grace, and was therein the subject of the saving influences of the Spirit of God. Therefore the right way is to distinguish among religious affections, between one sort and another. Let us now endeavour to do this; and in order to it, I would do two things.

I. I would mention some things which are no

signs one way or the other—either that affections are such as true religion consists in, or that they are otherwise; that we may be guarded against judging of affections by false signs.

II. I would observe some things, wherein those affections which are spiritual and gracious differ from those which are not so, and may be distinguished and known.

First, I would take notice of some things, which are no signs that affections are gracious, or that they are not.

I. It is no sign one way or the other, *that religious affections are very great or raised very high.*

Some are ready to condemn all high affections. If persons appear to have their religious affections raised to an extraordinary pitch, they are prejudiced against them, and determine that they are delusions without further enquiry. But if it be as has been proved, that true religion lies very much in religious affections, then it follows that, if there be a great deal of true religion, there will be great religious affections; if true religion in the hearts of men be raised to a great height, divine and holy affections will be raised to a great height.

Love is an affection; but will any Christian say, men ought not to love God and Jesus Christ in a high degree? and will any say, we ought not to have a very great hatred of sin, and a very deep sorrow for it? or that we ought not to exercise a

high degree of gratitude to God, for the mercies we receive of Him and the great things He has done for the salvation of fallen men? or that we should not have very great and strong desires after God and holiness? Is there any who will profess that his affections in religion are great enough; and will pray that he may not be affected in any higher degree, because high affections are improper and very unlovely in Christians, being enthusiastical and ruinous to true religion?

Our text plainly speaks of great and high affections, when it speaks of *rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* Here the most superlative expressions are used which language will afford. And the Scriptures often require us to exercise very high affections. Thus, in the first and great commandment of the law, there is an accumulation of expressions, as though words were wanting to express the degree in which we ought to love God: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.*" So the saints are called upon to exercise high degrees of joy: "*Rejoice,*" says Christ to His disciples, "*and be exceeding glad.*"

And we find the most eminent saints in Scripture often professing high affections. Thus the Psalmist speaks of his love, as if it were unspeakable: "*O how love I thy law!*" So he expresses a great degree of hatred of sin: "*Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with them that rise up against thee? I hate them with*

perfect hatred." He also expresses a high degree of sorrow for sin: he speaks of his sins "*going over his head, as an heavy burden, that was too heavy for him.*" So he often expresses great degrees of spiritual desires, in a multitude of the strongest expressions which can be conceived of; such as, "*his longing, his soul's thirsting as a dry and thirsty land where no water is, his panting, his flesh and heart crying out, his soul's breaking for the longing it hath.*" He expresses the exercises of great and extreme grief for the sins of others. "*Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.*" He expresses high exercises of joy. "*The king shall joy in thy strength, and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!*"

The Apostle Paul expresses high exercises of affection. Thus he expresses the exercises of pity and concern for others' good, even to anguish of heart; a great, fervent, and abundant love, and earnest and longing desires, and exceeding joy; and speaks of the exultation and triumphs of his soul, and his earnest expectation and hope, and his abundant tears, and the travails of his soul, in pity, grief, earnest desires, godly jealousy, and fervent zeal.

It is often foretold of the Church of God, in her future happy seasons here on earth, that she shall exceedingly rejoice. "*They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*" The same is represented in innumerable other places. And because high degrees of

joy are the proper and genuine fruits of the Gospel of Christ, therefore the angel calls this Gospel, "*good tidings of great joy, that should be to all people.*"

The saints and angels in heaven, that have religion in its highest perfection, are exceedingly affected with what they behold and contemplate of God's perfections and works. They are all as a pure heavenly flame of fire, in their love, and in the greatness and strength of their joy and gratitude: their praises are represented "*as the noise of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder.*" Now the only reason why their affections are so much higher than the holy affections of saints on earth is, they see the things they are affected by more according to their truth, and have their affections more conformed to the nature of things. And, therefore, if religious affections in men here below are but of the same nature and kind with theirs, the higher they are, and the nearer they are to theirs in degree, the better; because therein they will be so much the more conformed to truth, as theirs are.

From these things it certainly appears, that religious affections being in a very high degree is no evidence that they are not such as have the nature of true religion. Therefore they do greatly err who condemn persons as enthusiasts, merely because their affections are very high.

And, on the other hand, it is no evidence that religious affections are of a spiritual and gracious nature, because they are great. It is very manifest by the Holy Scripture, our sure and infallible rule

to judge of things of this nature, that there are religious affections which are very high that are not spiritual and saving. The children of Israel were greatly affected with God's mercy to them, when they had seen how wonderfully He wrought for them at the Red Sea, where they sang God's praise; though they soon forgat His works. So great multitudes who were affected with the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead were elevated to a high degree, and made a mighty ado, when Jesus presently after entered into Jerusalem, exceedingly magnifying Him, as though the ground were not good enough for the ass He rode to tread upon. But Christ had at that time but few true disciples. And how quickly was this ado at an end! All of this nature is quelled and dead, when this Jesus stands bound, with a mock robe and a crown of thorns, to be derided, spit upon, scourged, condemned, and executed. Indeed there was a great and loud outcry concerning Him among the multitude then as well as before; but of a very different kind: it is not then, *Hosanna, Hosanna,* but *Crucify, Crucify.*

And it is the concurring voice of all orthodox divines that there may be religious affections, which are raised to a very high degree, and yet there be nothing of true religion.

II. It is no sign that affections have the nature of true religion, or that they have not, *that they have great effects on the body.*

All affections whatsoever have in some respect or degree an effect on the body. As was observed before, such is our nature, and such are the laws of union of soul and body, that the mind can have no lively or vigorous exercise without some effect upon the body. So subject is the body to the mind, and so much do its fluids, especially the animal spirits, attend the motions and exercises of the mind, that there cannot be so much as an intense thought without an effect upon them. Yea, it is questionable whether an embodied soul ever so much as thinks one thought, or has any exercise at all, but that there is some corresponding motion or alteration of motion, in some degree, of the fluids in some part of the body. But universal experience shows that the exercise of the affections has in a special manner a tendency to some sensible effect upon the body.

Yet great effects on the body certainly are no sure evidences that affections are spiritual; for we see that such effects oftentimes arise from great affections about temporal things, and when religion is no way concerned in them. And if great affections about secular things, that are purely natural, may have these effects, I know not by what rule we should determine that high affections about religious things, which arise in like manner from nature, cannot have the like effect.

Nor, on the other hand, do I know of any rule any have to determine that gracious and holy affections, when raised as high as any natural

affections, and having equally strong and vigorous exercises, cannot have a great effect on the body. No such rule can be drawn from reason. I know of no reason why a being affected with a view of God's glory should not cause the body to faint, as well as being affected with a view of Solomon's glory. And no such rule has as yet been produced from the Scripture. None has ever been found in all the late controversies which have been about things of this nature. There is a great power in spiritual affections; we read of *the power which worketh in* Christians, and of the Spirit of God being in them as *the Spirit of power*, and of *the effectual working of His power* in them, yea, of *the working of God's mighty power in them.* But man's nature is weak: flesh and blood are represented in Scripture as exceeding weak; and particularly with respect to their unfitness for great spiritual and heavenly operations and exercises. Such unutterable and glorious joys may be too great and mighty for weak dust and ashes, so as to be considerably overbearing to it. The Scripture teaches us often that, if these ideas or views should be given to such a degree as they are given in heaven, the weak frame of the body could not subsist, and that no man can in that manner *see God and live.* The knowledge which the saints have of God's beauty and glory in this world, and those holy affections that arise from it, are of the same nature and kind with what the saints are the subjects of in heaven, differing only in degree and circumstances. What

God gives them here is a foretaste of heavenly happiness, and an earnest of their future inheritance. And who shall limit God in His giving this earnest, or say He shall give so much of the inheritance, such a part of the future reward, as an earnest of the whole, and no more? And seeing God has taught us in His Word that the whole reward is such that it would at once destroy the body, is it not too bold a thing for us so to set bounds to the Sovereign God, as to say that, in giving the earnest of this reward in this world, He shall never give so much of it as in the least to diminish the strength of the body, when God has nowhere thus limited Himself?

The prophet Habakkuk speaks of his body's being overborne by a sense of the majesty of God. "*When I heard, my belly trembled: my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself.*" So the Psalmist speaks expressly of his flesh trembling. "*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee.*"

That such ideas of God's glory as are sometimes given in this world have a tendency to overbear the body is evident, because the Scripture gives us an account that this has sometimes actually been the effect of those external manifestations God has made of Himself to some of the saints, which were made to that end, namely, to give them an idea of God's majesty and glory. Such instances we have in the Prophet Daniel, and the Apostle John. Daniel, giving an account of an external representa-

tion of the glory of Christ, says, "*And there remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned into corruption.*" And the Apostle John, giving an account of a like manifestation made to him, says, "*And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.*"

It is in vain to say here, these were only external manifestations or symbols of the glory of Christ, which these saints beheld. For, though it be true that they were outward representations of Christ's glory, which they beheld with their bodily eyes; yet the end and use of these external symbols or representations was to give to these prophets an idea of the thing represented, and that was the true divine glory and majesty of Christ, which is His spiritual glory. They were made use of only as significations of this spiritual glory, and thus undoubtedly they received them, and improved them, and were affected by them. And I think they are very bold and daring who will say God cannot, or shall not, give the like clear and affecting ideas and apprehensions of the same real glory and majesty of His nature, to His saints, without the intervention of any such external shadows of it.

Before I leave this head, I would further observe that it is plain the Scripture often makes use of bodily effects, to express the strength of holy and spiritual affections; such as trembling, groaning, being sick, crying out, panting, and fainting. Now, if it be supposed that these are only figurative expressions, to represent the degree of affection; yet I hope all will allow that they are fit and suit-

able figures to represent the high degree of those spiritual affections which the Spirit of God makes use of them to represent: which I do not see how they would be, if those spiritual affections, let them be in never so high a degree, have no tendency to any such things; but that, on the contrary, they are the proper effects and sad tokens of false affections, and the delusion of the devil. I cannot think God would commonly make use of things which are very alien from spiritual affections, and are shrewd marks of the hand of Satan, and smell strong of the bottomless pit, as beautiful figures to represent the high degree of holy and heavenly affections.

III. It is no sign that affections are truly gracious affections, or that they are not, *that they cause those who have them to be fluent, fervent, and abundant in talking of the things of religion.*

There are many persons who, if they see this in others, are greatly prejudiced against them. Their being so full of talk is with them a sufficient ground to condemn them, as Pharisees and ostentatious hypocrites. On the other hand, there are many who, if they see this effect in any, are very ignorantly and imprudently forward at once to determine that they are the true children of God, and are under the saving influences of His Spirit, and speak of it as a great evidence of a new creature. They say, "Such an one's mouth is now opened: he used to be slow to speak, but now he

is full and free; he is free now to open his heart, and tell his experiences, and declare the praises of God; it comes from him as free as water from a fountain;" and the like. And especially are they captivated into a confident and undoubting persuasion that they are savingly wrought upon, if they are not only free and abundant but very affectionate and earnest in their talk.

That persons are disposed to be abundant in talking of things of religion may be from a good cause, and it may be from a bad one. It may be because their hearts are very full of holy affections; for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* And it may be because persons' hearts are very full of religious affection which is not holy; for still *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* Therefore persons talking abundantly and very fervently about the things of religion can be an evidence of no more than this, that they are very much affected with the things of religion. But this may be (as has been already shown), and there be no grace. That which men are greatly affected with, while the high affection lasts, they will be earnestly engaged about, and will be likely to show that earnestness in their talk and behaviour; as the greater part of the Jews, in all Judea and Galilee, did for a while, about John the Baptist's preaching and baptism, when they were *willing for a season to rejoice in his light*: a mighty ado was made, all over the land and among all sorts of persons, about

this great prophet and his ministry. And so the multitude, in like manner, often manifested a great earnestness, a mighty engagedness of spirit, in everything that was external, about Christ and His preaching and miracles, *being astonished at His doctrine, anon with joy receiving the Word,* following Him sometimes night and day, leaving meat, drink, and sleep, to hear Him; sometimes crying Him up to the clouds, saying, "*Never man spake like this man!*" being fervent and earnest in what they said. But what did these things come to in the greater part of them?

A person may be over-full of talk of his own experiences; commonly falling upon it, everywhere and in all companies; and when it is so, it is rather a dark sign than a good one. As a tree that is over-full of leaves seldom bears much fruit; and as a cloud, though to appearance very pregnant and full of water, if it brings with it over-much wind, seldom affords much rain to the dry and thirsty earth.

False affections, if they are equally strong, are much more forward to declare themselves than true: because it is the nature of false religion, to affect show and observation; as it was with the Pharisees.[1]

IV. It is no sign that affections are gracious, or

[1] That famous experimental divine, Mr. Shepard, says, "A Pharisee's trumpet shall be heard to the town's end; when simplicity walks through the town unseen."

that they are otherwise, *that persons did not make them themselves, or excite them of their own contrivance and by their own strength.*

There are many in these days that condemn all affections which are excited in a way that the subjects of them can give no account of, as not seeming to be the fruit of any of their own endeavours, or the natural consequence of the faculties and principles of human nature, in such circumstances and under such means; but to be from the influence of some extrinsic and supernatural power upon their minds.

And it is true that for any to expect to receive the saving influences of the Spirit of God, while they neglect a diligent improvement of the appointed means of grace, is unreasonable presumption. And to expect that the Spirit of God will savingly operate upon their minds, without the Spirit's making use of means, as subservient to the effect, is enthusiastical. It is also undoubtedly true that the Spirit of God is very various in the manner and circumstances of His operations, and that sometimes He operates in a way more secret and gradual, and from smaller beginnings, than at others.

But if there be indeed a Power, entirely different from and beyond our power, or the power of all means and instruments, and above the power of nature, which is requisite in order to the production of saving grace in the heart, according to the general profession of the country; then certainly

it is in no wise unreasonable to suppose that this effect should very frequently be produced after such a manner, as to make it very manifest, apparent, and sensible that it is so. If grace be indeed owing to the powerful and efficacious operation of an extrinsic Agent or divine Efficient out of ourselves, why is it unreasonable to suppose it should seem to be so to them who are the subjects of it? Is it a strange thing that it should seem to be as it is? When grace in the heart is not produced by our strength, nor is the effect of the natural power of our own faculties or any means or instruments, but is properly the workmanship and production of the Spirit of the Almighty, is it a strange and unaccountable thing that it should seem to them who are subjects of it agreeable to truth, and not right contrary to truth?

They declare that what they are conscious of seems to them evidently not to be from themselves, but from the mighty power of the Spirit of God; and others from hence condemn them, and determine what they experience is not from the Spirit of God, but from themselves or from the devil. Thus unreasonably are multitudes treated at this day by their neighbours.

If it be indeed so, as the Scripture abundantly teaches, that grace in the soul is so the effect of God's power, that it is fitly compared to those effects which are farthest from being owing to any strength in the subject—such as a generation or a

being begotten, and resurrection or a being raised from the dead, and creation or a being brought out of nothing into being—and that it is an effect wherein the mighty power of God is greatly glorified and the exceeding greatness of His power is manifested; then what account can be given of it, that the Almighty, in so great a work of His power, should so carefully hide His power that the subjects of it should be able to discern nothing of it? or what reason or revelation have any to determine that He does so? If we may judge by the Scripture, this is not agreeable to God's manner in His operations and dispensations; but, on the contrary, it is God's manner, in the great works of His power and mercy which He works for his people, to order things so as to make His hand visible and His power conspicuous, and men's dependence on Him most evident, that *no flesh should glory in His presence,* that God alone *might be exalted,* and that *the excellency of the power might be of God and not of man,* and that *Christ's power might be manifested in our weakness,* and *none might say, mine own hand hath saved me.*

So it was in most of those temporal salvations which God wrought for Israel of old, which were types of the salvation of God's people from their spiritual enemies. So it was in the redemption of Israel from their Egyptian bondage. He redeemed them *with a strong hand and an outstretched arm*; and, that His power might be the more conspicuous, He suffered Israel first to be brought into the most

helpless and forlorn circumstances. So it was in the great redemption by Gideon. God would have his army diminished to a handful, and they without any other arms than trumpets and lamps and earthen pitchers. So it was in the deliverance of Israel from Goliath, by a stripling with a sling and a stone. So it was in that great work of God—His calling the Gentiles and converting the heathen world after Christ's ascension, after that *the world by wisdom knew not God*, and all the endeavours of philosophers had proved in vain for many ages to reform the world, and it was by everything become abundantly evident that the world was utterly helpless, by anything else but the mighty power of God. And so it was in most of the conversions of particular persons we have an account of in the history of the New Testament. They were not wrought on in that silent, secret, gradual, and insensible manner, which is now insisted on; but with those manifest evidences of a supernatural power, wonderfully and suddenly causing a great change, which in these days are looked upon as certain signs of delusion and enthusiasm.

So that it is very unreasonable and unscriptural to determine that affections are not from the gracious operations of God's Spirit, because they are sensibly not from the persons themselves that are the subjects of them.

On the other hand, it is no evidence that affections are gracious that they are not purposely produced by those who are the subjects of them,

or that they arise in their minds in a manner they cannot account for.

There are some who make this an argument in their own favour. When speaking of what they have experienced, they say: "I am sure I did not make it myself; it was a fruit of no contrivance or endeavour of mine; it came when I thought nothing of it; if I might have the world for it, I cannot make it again when I please." And hence they determine that what they have experienced must be from the mighty influence of the Spirit of God, and is of a saving nature; but very ignorantly, and without grounds. What they have been the subjects of may indeed not be from themselves directly, but may be from the operation of an invisible agent, some spirit besides their own. But it does not thence follow that it was from the Spirit of God. There are other spirits who have influence on the minds of men besides the Holy Ghost. We are directed not to believe every spirit, but to *try the spirits whether they be of God.* There are many false spirits, exceeding busy with men, who often transform themselves into angels of light, and do in many wonderful ways, with great subtlety and power, mimic the operations of the Spirit of God.

And there are many of Satan's operations which are very distinguishable from the voluntary exercises of men's own minds. They are so, in those dreadful and horrid suggestions and blasphemous injections with which he follows many persons; and

in vain and fruitless frights and terrors which he is the author of. And the power of Satan may be as immediate and as evident in false comforts and joys, as in terrors and horrid suggestions; and oftentimes is so in fact. It is not in men's power to put themselves into such raptures, as the Anabaptists in Germany, and many other raving enthusiasts like them, have been the subjects of.

And, besides, it is to be considered that persons may have those impressions on their minds, which may not be of their own producing nor from an evil spirit but from the Spirit of God, and yet not be from any saving but a common influence of the Spirit of God. And the subjects of such impressions may be of the number of those we read of, "*that are once enlightened, and taste of the heavenly gift, and are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and taste the good word of God, and the power of the world to come*"; and yet may be wholly unacquainted with those "*better things that accompany salvation.*"

And where neither a good nor evil spirit has any immediate hand, persons—especially such as are of a weak and vapoury habit of body, and the brain weak, and easily susceptive of impressions—may have strange apprehensions and imaginations, and strong affections attending them, unaccountably arising, which are not voluntarily produced by themselves. As a person who is asleep has dreams that he is not the voluntary author of; so may such persons in like manner be the subjects of involuntary impressions, when they are awake.

V. It is no sign that religious affections are truly holy and spiritual, or that they are not, *that they come with texts of Scripture, remarkably brought to the mind.*

It is no sign that affections are not gracious that they are occasioned by Scriptures so coming to mind; provided it be the Scripture itself, or the truth which the Scripture so brought contains and teaches, that is the foundation of the affection, and not merely or mainly the sudden and unusual manner of its coming to the mind.

But, on the other hand, neither is it any sign that affections are gracious that they arise on occasion of Scriptures brought suddenly and wonderfully to the mind; whether those affections be fear or hope, joy or sorrow, or any other. Some seem to look upon this as a good evidence that their affections are saving, especially if the affections excited are hope or joy, or any other which are pleasing and delightful. They will mention it as an evidence that all is right, that their experience came with the Word, and will say, "There were such and such sweet promises brought to my mind; they came suddenly, as if they were spoke to me: I had no hand in bringing such a text to my own mind; I was not thinking of anything leading to it; it came all at once, so that I was surprised." And, it may be, they will add, "One Scripture came flowing in after another, and so texts all over the Bible, the most sweet and pleasant, and the most apt and suitable, which could be devised;

and filled me full as I could hold. I could not but stand and admire. The tears flowed. I was full of joy and could not doubt any longer."

And thus they think they have undoubted evidence that their affections must be from God, and of the right kind, and their state good: but without any manner of grounds. How come they by any such rule as that, if any affections or experiences arise with promises, and conformable texts of Scripture unaccountably brought to mind without their recollection, or if a great number of sweet texts follow one another in a chain, that this is a certain evidence their experiences are saving? Where is any such rule to be found in the Bible, the great and only sure directory in things of this nature?

What deceives many of the less understanding and considerate sort of people in this matter seems to be this: that the Scripture is the Word of God, and has nothing in it which is wrong, but is pure and perfect; and therefore, those experiences which come from the Scripture must be right. But then it should be considered, affections may arise on occasion of the Scripture, and not properly come from the Scripture, as the genuine fruit of the Scripture and by a right use of it; but from an abuse of it.

What evidence is there that the devil cannot bring texts of Scripture to the mind, and misapply them, to deceive persons? There seems to be nothing in this which exceeds the power of Satan. It is no work of such mighty power to bring sounds

or letters to persons' minds, that we have any reason to suppose nothing short of Omnipotence can be sufficient for it. If Satan has power to bring any words or sounds at all to persons' minds, he may have power to bring words contained in the Bible. There is no higher sort of power required in men, to make the sounds which express the words of a text of Scripture than to make the sounds which express the words of an idle story or song. And so the same power in Satan, which is sufficient to renew one of those kinds of sounds in the mind, is sufficient to renew the other: the different signification, which depends wholly on custom, alters not the case as to ability to make or revive the sounds or letters. Or will any suppose that texts or Scriptures are such sacred things that the devil durst not abuse them, nor touch them? In this also they are mistaken.

He who was bold enough to lay hold on Christ Himself, and carry Him hither and thither, into the wilderness and into an high mountain and to a pinnacle of the temple, is not afraid to touch the Scripture, and abuse that for his own purposes; as he showed at the same time that he was so bold with Christ, he then brought one Scripture and another to deceive and tempt Him. And if Satan did presume, and was permitted, to put Christ Himself in mind of texts of Scripture to tempt *Him*, what reason have we to determine that he dare not, or will not be permitted, to put wicked men in mind of texts of Scripture to tempt and

deceive *them*? And if Satan may thus abuse one text of Scripture, so he may another. Its being a very excellent place of Scripture, a comfortable and precious promise, alters not the case as to his courage or ability. And if he can bring one comfortable text to the mind, so he may a thousand; and may choose out such Scriptures as tend most to serve his purpose, and may heap up Scripture promises, tending, according to the perverse application he makes of them, wonderfully to remove the rising doubts and to confirm the false joy and confidence of a poor deluded sinner.

And as the devil can abuse the Scripture to deceive and destroy men, so may men's own folly and corruptions as well. The sin which is in men acts like its father. Men's own hearts are deceitful like the devil, and use the same means to deceive.

So it is evident that persons may have high affections of hope and joy, arising on occasion of texts of Scripture, yea precious promises of Scripture coming suddenly and remarkably to their minds as though they were spoke to them, yea a great multitude of such texts following one another in a wonderful manner, and yet all this be no argument that these affections are divine, or that they are any other than the effects of Satan's delusions.

And I would further observe that persons may have raised and joyful affections, which may come

with the Word of God, and not only so but from the Word, and those affections not be from Satan, nor yet properly from the corruptions of their own hearts, but from some influence of the Spirit of God with the Word, and yet have nothing of the nature of true and saving religion in them. Thus the stony-ground hearers had great joy from the Word; yea, which is represented as arising from the Word, as growth from a seed; and their affections had in their appearance a very great and exact resemblance with those represented by the growth on the good ground, the difference not appearing until it was discovered by the consequences in a time of trial:—and yet there was no saving religion in these affections.

VI. It is no evidence that religious affections are saving, or that they are otherwise, *that there is an appearance of love in them.*

There are no professing Christians who pretend that this is an argument against the truth and saving nature of religious affections. But, on the other hand, there are some who suppose it is a good evidence that affections are from the sanctifying and saving influences of the Holy Ghost. Their argument is that Satan cannot love; this affection being directly contrary to the devil, whose very nature is enmity and malice. And it is true that nothing is more excellent, heavenly, and divine, than a spirit of true Christian love to God and men. It is more excellent than know-

ledge, or prophecy, or miracles, or speaking with the tongue of men and angels. It is the chief of the graces of God's Spirit, and the life, essence, and sum of all true religion; and that by which we are most conformed to heaven, and most contrary to hell and the devil.

But yet it is ill arguing from hence that there are no counterfeits of it. It may be observed that, the more excellent anything is, the more will be the counterfeits of it. Thus there are many more counterfeits of silver and gold than of iron and copper. There are many false diamonds and rubies, but who goes about to counterfeit common stones? Though the more excellent things are, the more difficult it is to make anything that shall be like them in their essential nature and internal virtue; yet the more manifold will the counterfeits be, and the more will art and subtlety be exercised and displayed in an exact imitation of the outward appearance. Thus there is the greatest danger of being cheated in buying of medicines that are most excellent and sovereign, though it be most difficult to imitate them with anything of the like value and virtue, and their counterfeits are good for nothing when we have them. So it is with Christian virtues and graces; the subtlety of Satan, and men's deceitful hearts, are wont chiefly to be exercised in counterfeiting those that are in highest repute. There are perhaps no graces that have more counterfeits than love and humility; these being virtues wherein the beauty of a true Christian does especially appear.

But with respect to love; it is plain by the Scripture that persons may have a kind of religious love, and yet have no saving grace. Christ speaks of many professing Christians that have such love, whose love will not continue and so shall fail of salvation. *"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."* Which latter words plainly show that those spoken of before, whose love shall not endure to the end but wax cold, should not be saved.

The apostle seems to intimate that there were many in his days who had a counterfeit love to Christ. *"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."* The last word, in the original, signifies *incorruption*; which shows that the apostle was sensible that there were many who had a kind of love to Christ, whose love was not pure and spiritual.

So, also, Christian love to the people of God may be counterfeited. It is evident by the Scripture that there may be strong affections of this kind, without saving grace; as there were in the Galatians towards the Apostle Paul, when they were *ready to pluck out their eyes and give them* to him; although the apostle expresses his fear that their affections were come to nothing, and that he had bestowed upon them labour in vain.

VII. *Persons having religious affections of many kinds, accompanying one another,* is not sufficient to

determine whether they have any gracious affections or no.

Though false religion is wont to be maimed and monstrous, and not to have that entireness and symmetry of parts which is to be seen in true religion: yet there may be a great variety of false affections together, that may resemble gracious affections.

It is evident that there are counterfeits of all kinds of gracious affections; as of love to God, and love to the brethren, as has been just now observed; so of godly sorrow for sin, as in Pharaoh, Saul, and Ahab, and the children of Israel in the wilderness; and of the fear of God, as in the Samaritans, "*who feared the Lord, and served their own gods*"; so of a gracious gratitude, as in the children of Israel who sang God's praise at the Red Sea, and in Naaman the Syrian after his miraculous cure of his leprosy.

So of spiritual joy, as in the stony-ground hearers, and particularly many of John the Baptist's hearers. So of zeal, as in Jehu, and in Paul before his conversion, and in the unbelieving Jews. So graceless persons may have earnest religious desires, that may be like Balaam's desires, which he expresses under an extraordinary view that he had of the happy state of God's people, as distinguished from all the rest of the world. They may also have a strong hope of eternal life, as the Pharisees had.

And as men, while in a state of nature, are

capable of a resemblance of all kinds of religious affections, so nothing hinders but that they may have many of them together. And what appears in fact does abundantly evince that it is very often so indeed. It is easy, from nature, and the nature of the affections, to give an account why, when one affection is raised very high, it should excite others; especially if the affection which is raised high be that of counterfeit love, as it was in the multitude who cried *Hosanna.* This will naturally draw many other affections after it. For, as was observed before, love is the chief of the affections, and, as it were, the fountain of them.

Let us suppose a person who has been for some time in great exercise and terror through fear of hell, and his heart weakened with distress and dreadful apprehensions, and upon the brink of despair, who is all at once delivered by being firmly made to believe, through some delusion of Satan, that God has pardoned him, and accepts him as the object of His dear love, and promises him eternal life; as suppose through some vision, or strong idea or imagination, suddenly excited in him of a Person with a beautiful countenance, smiling on him, and with arms open, and with blood dropping down, which he conceives to be Christ, without any other enlightening of the understanding to give a view of the spiritual divine excellency of Christ and His fulness, and of the way of salvation revealed in the Gospel: or perhaps by some voice or words coming as if

they were spoke to him, such as these, "*Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee*"; or, "*Fear not, it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom,*" which he takes to be immediately spoken by God to him, though there was no preceding acceptance of Christ or closing of the heart with Him:—I say, if we should suppose such a case, what various passions would naturally crowd at once, or one after another, into such a person's mind!

It is easy to be accounted for, from mere principles of nature, that a person's heart on such an occasion should be raised up to the skies with transports of joy, and be filled with fervent affection to that imaginary God or Redeemer, who he supposes has thus rescued him from the jaws of the dreadful destruction that his soul was so amazed with the fears of, and has received him with such endearment as a peculiar favourite. And that now he should be filled with admiration and gratitude, and his mouth should be opened and be full of talk about what he has experienced. And that, for a while, he should think and speak of scarce anything else, and should seem to magnify that God who has done so much for him, and call upon others to rejoice with him, and appear with a cheerful countenance, and talk with a loud voice. And, however before his deliverance he was full of quarrellings against the justice of God, that now it should be easy for him to submit to God, and appear to be very humble before Him, and lie at

His feet as tame as a lamb. And that he should now confess his own unworthiness, and cry out, "Why me? why me?"

Nor is it to be wondered at that now he should delight to be with them who acknowledge and applaud his happy circumstances, and should love all such as esteem and admire him and what he has experienced, and have violent zeal against all such as would make nothing of such things, and be disposed only to separate and, as it were, to proclaim war with all who be not of his party, and should now glory in his sufferings, and be very much for condemning and censuring all who seem to doubt or make any difficulty of these things. And so I might go on, and mention many other things, which will naturally arise in such circumstances. He must have but slightly considered human nature, who thinks such things as these cannot arise in this manner, without any supernatural interposition of divine power.

As from true divine love flow all Christian affections, so from a counterfeit love in like manner naturally flow other false affections. In both cases, love is the fountain, and the other affections are the streams. The various faculties, principles, and affections of the human nature are, as it were, many channels from one fountain. If there be sweet water in the fountain, sweet water will from thence flow out into those various channels; but if the water in the fountain be poisonous, then poisonous streams will also flow out into all those

channels. So that the channels and streams will be alike, corresponding one with another; but the great difference will lie in the nature of the water. Or man's nature may be compared to a tree, with many branches coming from one root. If the sap in the root be good, there will also be good sap distributed throughout the branches, and the fruit that is brought forth will be good and wholesome; but if the sap in the root and stock be poisonous, so it will be in many branches, and the fruit will be deadly. The tree in both cases may be alike; there may be an exact resemblance in shape; but the difference is found only in eating the fruit. It is thus (in some measure at least) oftentimes between saints and hypocrites.

There is sometimes a very great similitude between true and false experiences, in their appearance, and in what is expressed and related by the subjects of them. The difference between them is much like the difference between the dreams of Pharaoh's chief butler and baker. They seemed to be much alike; yet, though the baker's dream was so much like the happy and well-boding dream of his companion, it was quite contrary in its issue.

VIII. Nothing can certainly be determined concerning the nature of the affections by this, *that comforts and joys seem to follow awakenings and convictions of conscience, in a certain order.*

Many persons seem to be prejudiced against

affections and experiences, that come in such a method as has been much insisted on by many divines; first, such awakenings, fears, and awful apprehensions, followed with such legal humblings, in a sense of total sinfulness and helplessness, and then, such and such light and comfort. They look upon all such schemes, laying down such methods and steps, to be men's devising. And, particularly if high affections of joy follow great distress and terror, it is made by many an argument against those affections. But such prejudices and objections are without reason or Scripture. Surely it cannot be unreasonable to suppose that, before God delivers persons from a state of sin and exposedness to eternal destruction, He should give them some considerable sense of the evil He delivers them from; that they may be delivered sensibly, and understand their own salvation, and know something of what God does for them. As men that are saved are in two exceeding different states—first a state of condemnation, and then a state of justification and blessedness; and as God, in the work of the salvation of mankind, deals with them suitably to their intelligent rational nature; so it seems reasonable, and agreeable to God's wisdom, that men who are saved should be in these two states sensibly; first, that they should sensibly to themselves be in a state of condemnation, and thus in a state of woful calamity and dreadful misery, and so afterwards sensibly in a state of deliverance and happiness; and that they

should be first sensible of their absolute extreme necessity, and afterwards of Christ's sufficiency and God's mercy through Him.

And that it is God's manner of dealing with men, to *lead them into a wilderness, before He speaks comfortably to them,* and so to order it that they shall be brought into distress, and made to see their own helplessness and absolute dependence on His power and grace, before He appears to work any great deliverance for them, is abundantly manifest by the Scripture. Then is God wont to "*repent himself for his people, when their strength is gone, and there is none shut up or left,*" and when they are brought to see that their false gods cannot help them, and that the rock in whom they trusted is vain. Before God delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, they were prepared for it by being made to see that they were in an evil case, and to cry unto Him because of their hard bondage. So, before they were brought to their rest, and to enjoy the milk and honey of Canaan, God "*led them through a great and terrible wilderness, that he might humble them, and teach them what was in their heart, and so do them good in their latter end.*" The woman that had the issue of blood twelve years was not delivered until she had first "*spent all her living on physicians, and could not be healed of any,*" and so was left helpless, having no more money to spend; and then she came to the Great Physician, without any money or price, and was healed by Him. The Apostle Paul, before a remarkable

deliverance, was "*pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that he despaired even of life; but had the sentence of death in himself, that he might not trust in himself, but in God that raiseth the dead.*" There was first a great tempest, and the ship was covered with the waves and just ready to sink, and the disciples were brought to cry to Jesus, "*Lord, save us, we perish*"; and then the winds and seas were rebuked, and there was a great calm. The leper, before he is cleansed, must have his mouth stopped by a covering over his upper lip, and was to acknowledge his great misery and utter uncleanness by rending his clothes and crying, "*Unclean, unclean.*" Joseph, who was sold by his brethren, and therein was a type of Christ, brings his brethren into great perplexity and distress, and brings them to reflect on their sin, and to say, *We are verily guilty*; and at last to resign up themselves entirely into his hands for bondmen; and then reveals himself to them, as their brother and their saviour.

And if we consider those extraordinary manifestations which God made of Himself to saints of old, we shall find that He commonly first manifested Himself in a way which was terrible, and then by those things that were comfortable. So it was with Abraham; first a horror of great darkness fell upon him, and then God revealed Himself to him in sweet promises. So it was with Moses at Mount Sinai; first, God appeared to him in all the terrors of His dreadful majesty, so that Moses

said, "*I exceedingly fear and quake,*" and then He made all His goodness to pass before him. So it was with Elijah; first, there is a stormy wind, and earthquake, devouring fire, and then a still, small, sweet voice. So it was with Daniel; he first saw Christ's countenance as lightning that terrified him and caused him to faint away; and then he is strengthened and refreshed with comfortable words. So it was with the Apostle John in Patmos. And there is an analogy observable in God's dispensations and deliverances which He works for His people, and the manifestation which He makes of Himself to them, both ordinary and extraordinary.

But there are many things in Scripture which do more directly show that this is God's ordinary manner in working salvation for the souls of men, and in the manifestations God makes of Himself and of His mercy in Christ, in the ordinary works of His grace on the hearts of sinners. The servant that owed his prince ten thousand talents is first held to his debt, and the king pronounces sentence of condemnation upon him, and commands him to be sold, and his wife and children, and payment to be made; and thus he humbles him, and brings him to own the whole debt to be just, and then forgives him all. The prodigal son spends all he has, and is brought to see himself in extreme circumstances, and to humble himself and own his unworthiness, before he is relieved and feasted by his father. Old inveterate wounds must be searched

to the bottom, in order to healing; and the Scripture compares sin, the wound of the soul, to this, and speaks of healing this wound without thus searching of it as vain and deceitful.

Christ, in the work of His grace on the hearts of men, is compared to rain on the mown grass, grass that is cut down with a scythe, representing His refreshing, comforting influences on the wounded spirit. Our first parents, after they had sinned, were first terrified with God's majesty and justice, and had their sin with its aggravations set before them by their Judge, before they were relieved by the promise of the Seed of the woman. Christians are spoken of as those "*that have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them,*" which representation implies great fear and sense of danger preceding. To the like purpose, Christ is called "*a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.*" And it seems to be the natural import of the word *Gospel*, glad tidings, that it is news of deliverance and salvation, after great fear and distress.

And, if it be indeed God's manner (as I think the foregoing considerations show that it undoubtedly is), before He gives men the comfort of a deliverance from their sin and misery, to give them a considerable sense of the greatness and dreadfulness of those evils and their extreme wretchedness by reason of them; surely it is not unreasonable to suppose that persons, at least oftentimes while under these views, should have great distresses and terrible apprehensions of mind.

Especially if it be considered what these evils are that they have a view of, which are no other than great and manifold sins against the infinite majesty of the great Jehovah, and the suffering of the fierceness of His wrath to all eternity. And the more so still, when we have many plain instances in Scripture of persons that have actually been brought into great distress by such convictions, before they have received saving consolations: as the multitude at Jerusalem, who were "*pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" and the Apostle Paul, who trembled and was astonished before he was comforted; and the jailor, when "*he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*"

From these things it appears to be very unreasonable in professing Christians to make this an objection against the truth and spiritual nature of the comfortable and joyful affections which any have, that they follow such awful apprehensions and distresses as have been mentioned.

But, on the other hand, it is no evidence that comforts and joys are right, because they succeed great terrors and amazing fears of hell. For, though convictions of conscience do often cause terror, yet they do not consist in it; and terrors do often arise from other causes. Convictions of conscience, through the influences of God's Spirit, consist in conviction of sinfulness of heart and

practice, and of the dreadfulness of sin as committed against a God of terrible majesty, infinite holiness and hatred of sin, and strict justice in punishing of it. But there are some persons that have frightful apprehensions of hell, a dreadful pit ready to swallow them up, and flames just ready to lay hold of them, and devils around them ready to seize them; who at the same time seem to have very little proper enlightenings of conscience, really convincing them of their sinfulness of heart and life.

The devil, if permitted, can terrify men as well as the Spirit of God; it is a work natural to him, and he has many ways of doing it, in a manner tending to no good. He may exceedingly affright persons by impressing on them many external images and ideas, of a countenance frowning, a sword drawn, black clouds of vengeance, words of an awful doom pronounced, hell gaping, devils coming, and the like, not to convince persons of things that are true and revealed in the Word of God, but to lead them to vain and groundless determination—as that their day is past, that they are reprobated, that God is implacable, that He has come to a resolution immediately to cut them off.

And the terrors which some persons have are very much owing to the particular constitution and temper they are of. Nothing is more manifest than that some persons are of such a temper and frame, that their imaginations are more strongly impressed with everything they are affected with than others.

And the impression on the imagination reacts on the affection, and raises that still higher; and so affection and imagination act reciprocally, one on another, till their affection is raised to a vast height, and the person is swallowed up and loses all possession of himself.

And some speak of a great sight they have of their wickedness, who really, when the matter comes to be well examined into and thoroughly weighed, are found to have little or no convictions of conscience. They tell of a dreadful hard heart, and how their heart lies like a stone; when truly they have none of those things in their minds or thoughts wherein the hardness of men's hearts does really consist. They tell of a dreadful load and sink of sin, a heap of black and loathsome filthiness within them; when, if the matter be carefully enquired into, they have not in view anything wherein the corruption of nature does truly consist, nor have they any thought of any particular thing wherein their hearts are sinfully defective, or fall short of what ought to be in them, or any exercises at all of corruption in them. And many think also they have great convictions of their actual sins, who truly have none. They tell how their sins are set in order before them, they see them stand encompassing them round in a row with a dreadful frightful appearance; when really they have not so much as one of the sins they have been guilty of in the course of their lives coming into view, that they are affected with the aggravations of.

And if persons have had great terrors which really have been from the awakening and convincing influences of the Spirit of God, it does not thence follow that their terrors must needs issue in true comfort. The unmortified corruption of the heart may quench the Spirit of God, after He has been striving, by leading men to presumptuous and self-exalting hopes and joys, as well as otherwise.

But if comforts and joys do not only come after great terrors and awakenings, but there be an appearance of such preparatory convictions and humiliations, and brought about very distinctly by such steps and in such a method as has frequently been observable in true converts; this is no certain sign that the light and comforts which follow are true and saving. And for these following reasons:—

First.—As the devil can counterfeit all the saving operations and graces of the Spirit of God, so he can counterfeit those operations that are preparatory to grace. If Satan can counterfeit those effects of God's Spirit which are special, divine, and sanctifying, so that there shall be a very great resemblance in all that can be observed by others; much more easily may he imitate those works of God's Spirit which are common, and which men, while they are yet his own children, are the subjects of. These works are in no wise so much above him as the other. How far was Saul brought, though a very wicked man and of a haughty spirit, when he (though a great king) was brought in conviction of

his sin to fall down, all in tears, weeping aloud, before David his own subject (and one that he had for a long time mortally hated and openly treated as an enemy), and condemn himself before him, crying out, "*Thou art more righteous than I.*" And if this proud monarch, in a pang of affection, was brought to humble himself so low before a subject that he hated and still continued an enemy to, there doubtless may be appearances of great conviction and humiliation in men before God, while they yet remain enemies to Him, and though they finally continue so. There is oftentimes in men, who are terrified through fears of hell, a great appearance of their being brought off from their own righteousness, when they are not brought off from it in all ways, although they are in many ways that are more plain and visible. They have only exchanged some ways of trusting in their own righteousness, for others that are more secret and subtle. Oftentimes a great degree of discouragement, as to many things they used to depend upon, is taken for humiliation: and that is called a submission to God, which is no absolute submission, but has some secret bargain in it that it is hard to discover.

Secondly.—If the operations and effects of the Spirit of God, in the convictions and comforts of true converts, may be sophisticated, then the order of them may be imitated. If Satan can imitate the things themselves, he may easily put them one after another, in such a certain order. If the devil

can make A, B, and C, it is as easy for him to put A first, and B next, and C next, as to range them in a contrary order. The nature of divine things is harder for the devil to imitate than their order. He cannot *exactly* imitate divine operations in their nature, though his counterfeits may be very much like them in external appearance; but he can exactly imitate their order. And therefore no order or method of operations and experiences is any certain sign of their divinity. That only is to be trusted to, as a certain evidence of grace, which Satan cannot do, and which it is impossible should be brought to pass by any power short of divine.

Thirdly.—We have no certain rule to determine how far God's own Spirit may go in those operations and convictions which in themselves are not spiritual and saving, and yet the person that is the subject of them never be converted, but fall short of salvation at last. We do not find any legal convictions, or comforts following these legal convictions, in any certain method or order, ever once mentioned in the Scripture as certain signs of grace, or things peculiar to the saints; although we do find gracious operations and effects themselves so mentioned thousands of times. Which should be enough with Christians, who are willing to have the Word of God, rather than their own philosophy and experiences and conjectures, as their sufficient and sure guide in things of this nature.

Fourthly.—Experience does greatly confirm that persons' seeming to have convictions and comforts

following one another in such a method and order, as is frequently observable in true converts, is no certain sign of grace. I appeal to all those ministers in this land who have had much occasion of dealing with souls in the late extraordinary season, whether there have not been many who do not endure well, that have given a fair account of their experiences, and have seemed to be converted according to rule, with convictions and affections succeeding distinctly and exactly, in that order and method which has been ordinarily insisted on, as the order of the operations of the Spirit of God in conversion.

And as a seeming to have this distinctness as to steps and method is no certain sign that a person is converted; so a being without it is no evidence that a person is not converted. For though it might be made evident to a demonstration, on Scripture principles, that a sinner cannot be brought heartily to receive Christ as his Saviour who is not convinced of his sin and misery, and of his own emptiness and helplessness and just desert of eternal condemnation; and that therefore such convictions must be some way implied in what is wrought in his soul; yet nothing proves it to be necessary, that all those things which are implied or presupposed in an act of faith in Christ must be plainly and distinctly wrought in the soul, in so many successive and separate works of the Spirit, that shall be each one plain and manifest, in all who are truly converted. On the contrary (as Mr. Shepard observes), sometimes the change made in

a saint, at first, is like a confused chaos; so that the saints know not what to make of it.

The manner of the Spirit's proceeding in them that are born of the Spirit is very often exceeding mysterious and unsearchable. We, as it were, *hear the sound of it*, the effect of it is discernible; but no man can tell *whence it came or whither it went.* And it is oftentimes as difficult to know the way of the Spirit in the new birth as in the first birth. "*Thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, or how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child.*" And the conception of Christ in the womb of the blessed Virgin, by the power of the Holy Ghost, seems to be a designed resemblance of the conception of Christ in the soul of a believer, by the power of the same Holy Ghost. And we know not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow, either in the womb or in the heart that conceives this holy Child. The new creature may use that language in the Psalm: "*I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.*" Concerning the generation of Christ, both in His person and also in the hearts of His people, it may be said, "*Who can declare his generation?*" We know not the works of God, that worketh all.

It is to be feared that some have gone too far towards directing the Spirit of the Lord, and marking out His footsteps for Him, and limiting Him to certain steps and methods. Experience plainly shows that God's Spirit is unsearchable and

untraceable, in some of the best of Christians, in the method of His operations in their conversion. Nor does He proceed discernibly in the steps of a particular established scheme, one half so often as is imagined. There has been so much to be seen of the operations of the Spirit of God of late, that they who have had much to do with souls, and are not blinded with a sevenfold veil of prejudice, must know that He is so exceeding various in the manner of His operating, that in many cases it is impossible to trace Him or find out His way.

What we have principally to do with, in our enquiries into our own state or the directions we give to others, is the nature of the effect that God has brought to pass in the soul. As to the steps which the Spirit of God took to bring that effect to pass, we may leave them to Him. We are often in Scripture expressly directed to try ourselves by the nature of the fruits of the Spirit; but nowhere by the Spirit's method of producing them. Many do greatly err in their notions of a clear work of conversion; calling that a clear work, where the successive steps of influence and method of experience are clear: whereas that indeed is the clearest work,—not where the order of *doing* is clearest,—but where the spiritual and divine nature of the work *done*, and effect *wrought*, is most clear.

IX. It is no certain sign that the religious affections which persons have are such as have in them the nature of true religion, or that they have

not, *that they dispose persons to spend much time in religion, and to be zealously engaged in the external duties of worship.*

This has, very unreasonably, of late been looked upon as an argument against the religious affections which some have had, that they spend so much time in reading, praying, singing, hearing sermons, and the like. It is plain from the Scripture that it is the tendency of true grace to cause persons very much to delight in such religious exercises. True grace had this effect on Anna the prophetess. "*She departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.*" And grace had this effect upon the primitive Christians in Jerusalem. "*And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God.*" Grace made Daniel delight in the duty of prayer and solemnly attend it three times a day: as it also did David. "*Evening, morning, and at noon will I pray.*" Grace makes the saints delight in singing praises to God. "*Sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant.*" It also causes them to delight to hear the Word of God preached: it makes the Gospel a *joyful sound* to them, and makes the feet of those who publish these good tidings to be *beautiful.* It makes them love God's public worship. "*Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.*"

This is the nature of true grace. But yet, on the

other hand, persons being disposed to abound and to be zealously engaged in the external exercises of religion, and to spend much time in them, is no sure evidence of grace; because such a disposition is found in many that have no grace. So it was with the Israelites of old, whose services were abominable to God; they attended the "*new moons, and Sabbaths, and calling of assemblies, and spread forth their hands, and made many prayers.*" So it was with the Pharisees; they "*made long prayers, and fasted twice a week.*"

Experience shows that persons from false religion may be inclined to be exceeding abundant in the external exercises of religion; yea, to give themselves up to them and devote almost their whole time to them. Formerly a sort of people were very numerous in the Romish Church, called *recluses,* who forsook the world and utterly abandoned the society of mankind and shut themselves up close, in a narrow cell, with a vow never to stir out of it nor to see the face of any of mankind any more (unless that they might be visited in case of sickness); to spend all their days in the exercise of devotion and converse with God. There were also in old time great multitudes called hermits and anchorites, that left the world to spend all their days in lonesome deserts, to give themselves up to religious contemplations and exercises of devotion; some sorts of them having no dwellings but the caves and vaults of the mountains, and no food but the spontaneous productions of the earth. I once

lived for many months next door to a Jew (the houses adjoining one to another), and had much opportunity daily to observe him; who appeared to me the devoutest person that ever I saw in my life; great part of his time being spent in acts of devotion at his eastern window, which opened next to mine, seeming to be most earnestly engaged, not only in the daytime, but sometimes whole nights.

X. Nothing can be certainly known of the nature of religious affections by this, *that they much dispose persons with their mouths to praise and glorify God.*

No Christian will make it an argument against a person that he seems to have such a disposition; nor can it reasonably be looked upon as an evidence for a person, if those things that have been already observed and proved be duly considered,—that persons without grace may have high affections towards God and Christ, and that their affections being strong may fill their mouths, and incline them to speak much and very earnestly about the things they are affected with, and that there may be counterfeits of all kinds of gracious affection. But it will appear more evidently and directly that this is no certain sign of grace, if we consider what instances the Scripture gives us of it in those that were graceless. We often have an account of this in the multitude that were present when Christ preached and wrought miracles. "*They were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it in*

this fashion." "*The multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see.*"

And after Christ's ascension, when the apostles had healed the impotent man, we are told that "*all men glorified God for that which was done.*" When the Gentiles in Antioch of Pisidia heard from Paul and Barnabas, that God would reject the Jews, and take the Gentiles to be His people in their room, they were affected with this goodness of God to the Gentiles, "*and glorified the Word of the Lord*": but all that did so were not true believers; but only a certain elect number of them; as is intimated in the account we have of it. "*As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*" So of old the children of Israel at the Red Sea "*sang God's praise; but soon forgat his works.*" And the Jews in Ezekiel's time "*with their mouth shewed much love, while their heart went after their covetousness.*"

It is no certain sign that a person is graciously affected, if, in the midst of his hopes and comforts, he is greatly affected with God's unmerited mercy to him that is so unworthy, and seems greatly to extol and magnify free grace. Those that yet remain with unmortified pride and enmity against God may, when they imagine that they have received extraordinary kindness from God, cry out of their unworthiness, and magnify God's undeserved goodness to them, from no other conviction of their ill-deservings and from no higher principle than Saul had, who, while he yet remained with

unsubdued pride and enmity against David, was brought though a king to acknowledge his unworthiness and cry out, "*I have played the fool, I have erred exceedingly*"; and from no higher principle than that whence Nebuchadnezzar was affected with God's dispensations, that he saw and was the subject of, and praises, extols, and honours the King of heaven; and both he and Darius, in their high affections, call upon all nations to praise God.

XI. It is no sign that affections are right, or that they are wrong, *that they make persons that have them exceeding confident that what they experience is divine, and that they are in a good estate.*

It is an argument with some against persons that they are deluded if they pretend to be assured of their good estate, and to be carried beyond all doubting of the favour of God; supposing that there is no such thing to be expected in the Church of God, as a full and absolute assurance of hope; unless it be in some very extraordinary circumstances, as in the case of martyrdom: contrary to the doctrine of Protestants, which has been maintained by their most celebrated writers against the Papists; and contrary to the plainest Scripture evidence.

It is manifest that it was a common thing for the saints, whom we have a history or particular account of in Scripture, to be assured. God, in the plainest and most positive manner, revealed and testified his special favour to Noah, Abraham, Isaac,

Jacob, Moses, Daniel, and others. Job often speaks of his sincerity and uprightness with the greatest imaginable confidence and assurance, calling God to witness to it; and says plainly, "*I know that my Redeemer liveth.*" David, throughout the Book of Psalms, almost everywhere speaks without any hesitancy and in the most positive manner of God as his God; glorying in Him as his Portion and Heritage, his Rock and Confidence, his Shield, Salvation, and High Tower. Hezekiah appeals to God, as one that knew that he had walked before Him in truth and with a perfect heart. Jesus Christ, in His dying discourse with His eleven disciples (which was as it were Christ's last will and testament to His disciples and to His whole Church), often declares His special and everlasting love to them in the plainest and most positive terms; and promises them a future participation with Him in His glory in the most absolute manner; and tells them at the same time that He does so to the end that their joy might be full. He did not desire to hold them in the least suspense.

And He concluded that last discourse of His with a prayer in their presence, wherein he speaks positively to His Father of those eleven disciples, as having all of them savingly *known* Him, and *believed in* Him, and *received and kept* His Word; and that they were *not of the world*; and that *for their sakes He sanctified Himself*; and that His *will was that they should be with Him in His glory.* By these things it is evident that it is agreeable to

Christ's designs, and the contrived ordering and disposition Christ makes of things in His Church, that there should be sufficient and abundant provision made that His saints might have full assurance of their future glory.

The Apostle Paul, through all his Epistles, speaks in an assured strain: ever speaking positively of his special relation to Christ, his Lord and Master and Redeemer, and his interest in and expectation of the future reward. It would be endless to take notice of all places that might be enumerated.

And the nature of the covenant of grace, and God's declared ends in the appointment and constitution of things in that covenant, do plainly show it to be God's design to make ample provision for the saints having an assured hope of eternal life, while living here upon earth. For so are all things ordered and contrived in that covenant, that everything might be made sure on God's part. The promises are most full, and very often repeated, and various ways exhibited; and there are many witnesses and many seals; and God has confirmed His promises with an oath. And His declared design in all this is, that the heirs of the promises might have an undoubting hope and full joy, in an assurance of their future glory. "*That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us.*"

It further appears that assurance is not only attainable in some very extraordinary cases, but

that all Christians are directed to *give all diligence to make their calling and election sure,* and are told how they may do it. And it is spoken of as a thing very unbecoming of Christians, and an argument of something very blamable in them, not to know whether Christ be in them or no. "*Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*" And it is implied that it is an argument of a very blamable negligence in Christians, if they practise Christianity after such a manner as to remain uncertain of the reward. "*I therefore so run, as not uncertainly.*" And, to add no more, it is manifest that Christians knowing their interests in the saving benefits of Christianity is a thing ordinarily attainable, because the apostles tell us by what means Christians (and not only apostles and martyrs) were wont to know this. "*And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*" "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*" "*Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*"

Therefore it must needs be very unreasonable to determine that persons are hypocrites, and their affections wrong, because they seem to be out of doubt of their own salvation, and the affections they are the subjects of seem to banish all fears of hell.

On the other hand, it is no sufficient reason to determine that men are saints, and their affections

gracious, because the affections they have are attended with an exceeding confidence that their state is good and their affections divine. Nothing can be certainly argued from their confidence, how great and strong soever it seems to be. If we see a man that boldly calls God his Father, and commonly speaks in the most bold, familiar, and appropriating language in prayer, "My Father, my dear Redeemer, my sweet Saviour, my Beloved," and the like; and it is a common thing for him to use the most confident expressions before men about the goodness of his state—such as, "I know certainly that God is my Father; I know so surely as there is a God in heaven that He is my God; I know I shall go to heaven as well as if I were there; I know that God is now manifesting Himself to my soul and is now smiling upon me"; and seems to have done for ever with any enquiry or examination into his state, as a thing sufficiently known and out of doubt, and to contemn all that so much as intimate or suggest that there is some reason to doubt or fear whether all is right: such things are no signs at all that it is indeed so as he is confident it is.

Such an overbearing, high-handed, and violent sort of confidence as this has not the countenance of a true Christian assurance. It savours more of the spirit of the Pharisees, who never doubted but that they were saints, and the most eminent of saints, and were bold to go to God, and come up near to Him, and lift up their eyes, and thank

Him for the great distinction He had made between them and other men; and when Christ intimated that they were blind and graceless, despised the suggestion. If they had more of the spirit of the publican with their confidence, who in a sense of his exceeding unworthiness *stood afar off*, and *durst not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven*, but *smote on his breast*, and cried out of himself as a sinner, their confidence would have more of the aspect of the confidence of one that humbly trusts and hopes in Christ, and has no confidence in himself.

If we do but consider what the hearts of natural men are, what principles they are under the dominion of, what blindness and deceit, what self-flattery, self-exaltation, and self-confidence reign there, we need not at all wonder that their high opinion of themselves and confidence of their happy circumstances be as high and strong as mountains, and as violent as a tempest, when once conscience is blinded and convictions killed with false, high affections.

When once a hypocrite is thus established in a false hope, he has not those things to cause him to call his hope in question, that oftentimes are the occasion of the doubting of true saints. As, *first*, he has not that cautious spirit, that great sense of the vast importance of a sure foundation, and that dread of being deceived. The comforts of the true saints increase awakening and caution, and a lively sense how great a thing it is to appear

before an infinitely holy, just, and omniscient Judge. But false comforts put an end to these things and dreadfully stupefy the mind. *Secondly,* the hypocrite has not the knowledge of his own blindness and the deceitfulness of his own heart, and that mean opinion of his own understanding that the true saint has. Those that are deluded with false discoveries and affections are evermore highly conceited of their light and understanding. *Thirdly,* the devil does not assault the hope of the hypocrite as he does the hope of a true saint. A hypocrite may retain his hope without opposition as long as he lives, the devil never disturbing it nor attempting to disturb it. But there is perhaps no true Christian but what has his hope assaulted by him. Satan assaulted Christ Himself upon this, whether He were the Son of God or no: and the servant is not above his Master nor the disciple above his Lord; it is enough for the disciple, that is most privileged in this world, to be as his Master. *Fourthly,* he who has a false hope, has not that sight of his own corruptions which the saint has. A true Christian has ten times so much to do with his heart and its corruptions, as a hypocrite: and the sins of his heart and practice appear to him in their blackness; they look dreadful; and it often appears a very mysterious thing that any grace can be consistent with such corruption, or should be in such a heart. But a false hope hides corruption, covers it all over, and the hypocrite looks clean and bright in his own eyes.

There are two sorts of hypocrites: one that are deceived with their outward morality and external religion; and the other are those that are deceived with false discoveries and elevations; which often cry down works and men's own righteousness, and talk much of free grace; but at the same time make a righteousness of their discoveries and of their humiliation, and exalt themselves to heaven with them. These two kinds of hypocrites Mr. Shepard, in his *Exposition of the Parable of the Ten Virgins*, distinguishes by the names of *legal* and *evangelical* hypocrites, and often speaks of the latter as the worse. And it is evident that the latter are commonly by far the most confident in their hope, and with the most difficulty brought off from it: I have scarcely known the instance of such an one in my life that has been undeceived.

The chief grounds of the confidence of many of them are the very same kind of impulses and supposed revelation (sometimes with texts of Scripture, and sometimes without), that so many of late have had concerning future events; calling these impulses about their good estate *the witness of the Spirit*; entirely misunderstanding the nature of the witness of the Spirit, as I shall show hereafter. Neither is it any wonder that, when they have such a supposed revelation of their good estate, it raises in them the highest degree of confidence of it. It is found by abundant experience that those who are led away by impulses and imagined revelations are extremely confident. They suppose

that the great JEHOVAH has declared these and those things to them; and having His immediate testimony, a strong confidence is the highest virtue. Hence they are bold to say, *I know this or that;—I know certainly;—I am as sure as that I have a being*, and the like; and they despise all argument and enquiry in the case.

I have known of several persons that have had a fond desire of something of a temporal nature, through a violent passion that has possessed them, and they at last have had an impression or supposed revelation that they should obtain what they sought; and they have looked upon it as a sure promise from the Most High, which has made them most ridiculously confident. And there is nothing hinders but that persons who are seeking their salvation may be deceived by the like delusive impressions, and be made confident of that the same way.

The confidence of many of this sort of hypocrites —*evangelical hypocrites*—is like the confidence of some madmen, who think they are kings: they will maintain it against all manner of reason and evidence. And in one sense it is much more immovable than a truly gracious assurance. A true assurance is not upheld but by the soul's being kept in a holy frame, and grace maintained in lively exercise. If the actings of grace do much decay in the Christian, and he falls into a lifeless frame, he loses his assurance. But this kind of confidence of hypocrites will not be shaken by sin;

they (at least some of them) will maintain their boldness in their hope in the most corrupt frames and wicked ways; which is a sure evidence of their delusion.

And here I cannot but observe that there are certain doctrines often preached to the people which need to be delivered with more caution and explanation than they frequently are. For, as they are by many understood, they tend greatly to establish this delusion and false confidence of hypocrites. The doctrines I speak of are those of "Christians living by faith, not by sight"; "their giving glory to God by trusting Him in the dark"; "living upon Christ and not upon experiences"; "not making their good frames the foundation of their faith": which are excellent and important doctrines indeed, rightly understood, but corrupt and destructive as many understand them. The Scripture speaks of living or walking by faith and not by sight, in no other way than these, namely, a being governed by a respect to eternal things, that are the objects of faith and are not seen, and not by a respect to temporal things, which are seen; and believing things revealed, that we never saw with bodily eyes; and also living by faith in the promise of future things, without yet seeing or enjoying the things promised, or knowing the way how they can be fulfilled. But this doctrine, as it is understood by many, is, that Christians ought firmly to believe and trust in Christ, without spiritual sight or light,

and although they are in a dark dead frame, and for the present have no spiritual experiences or discoveries. That they should confidently believe and trust, while they yet remain without spiritual light or sight, is antiscriptural and absurd. That faith which is without spiritual light is not the faith of the *children of the light and of the day*; but the presumption of the children of darkness. And therefore to press and urge them to believe, without any spiritual light or sight, tends greatly to help forward the delusions of the prince of darkness. Men not only cannot exercise faith without some spiritual light, but they can exercise faith only just in such proportion as they have spiritual light. Men will trust in God no further than they know Him: and they cannot be in the exercise of faith in Him one ace further than they have a sight of His fulness and faithfulness in exercise. Noı can they have the exercise of trust in God any further than they are in a gracious frame. They that are in a dead carnal frame doubtless ought to trust in God; because that would be the same thing as coming out of their bad frame and turning to God: but to exhort men confidently to trust in God, and so hold up their hope and peace, though they are not in a gracious frame, is the same thing in effect as to exhort them confidently to trust in God, but not with a gracious trust. And what is that but a wicked presumption?

It is true that it is the duty of God's people to trust in Him when in darkness, and though they

remain still in darkness, in that sense, that they ought to trust in God when the aspects of His providence are dark, and look as though God had forsaken them, and did not hear their prayers; and many clouds gather, and many enemies surround them with a formidable aspect, threatening to swallow them up; and all events of providence seem to be against them, all circumstances seem to render the promises of God difficult to be fulfilled. Then God must be trusted out of sight, when we cannot see which way it is possible for Him to fulfil His word; everything but God's mere word makes it look unlikely, so that, if persons believe, they must hope against hope. But how different a thing is this from trusting in God without spiritual sight, and being at the same time in a dead and carnal frame!

There is also such a thing as spiritual light being let into the soul in one way, when it is not in another; and so there is such a thing as the saints trusting in God, and also knowing their good estate, when they are destitute of some kinds of experience. As, for instance, they may have clear views of God's sufficiency and faithfulness, and so confidently trust in Him, and know that they are His children; and at the same time not have those clear and sweet ideas of His love, as at other times: for it was thus with Christ Himself in His last passion. And they may have views of much of God's sovereignty, holiness, and all-sufficiency, enabling them quietly to submit to Him, and

exercise a sweet and most encouraging hope in God's fulness, when they are not satisfied of their own good estate. But how different things are these from confidently trusting in God, without spiritual light or experience!

Those that thus insist on persons living by faith, when they have no experience and are in very bad frames, are also very absurd in their notions of faith. What they mean by faith is, believing that they are in a good estate. He is the best man, and puts most honour upon God, that maintains his hope of his good estate the most confidently and immovably, when he has the least light or experience; that is to say, when he is in the worst and wickedest frame and way; because, forsooth, that is a sign that he is *strong in faith, giving glory to God,* and against hope believes in hope. But what Bible do they learn this notion of faith out of, that it is a man's confidently believing that he is in a good estate? If this be faith, the Pharisees had faith in an eminent degree, some of whom, Christ teaches, committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. The Scripture represents faith as that by which men are brought into a good estate; and therefore it cannot be the same thing as believing that they are already in a good estate. To suppose that faith consists in persons believing that they are in a good estate, is in effect the same thing as to suppose that faith consists in a person's believing that he has faith, or in believing that he believes.

Indeed, persons' doubting of their good estate may in several respects arise from unbelief. Though there be many things that are good evidences of a work of grace in them, yet they doubt very much whether they are really in a state of favour with God, because it is they—those that are so unworthy. Their doubts in such a case arise from unbelief, as they arise from want of a sufficient sense of and reliance on the infinite riches of God's grace, and the sufficiency of Christ for the chief of sinners.

They may also be from unbelief when they doubt of their state, because of the mystery of God's dealings with them. They are not able to reconcile such dispensations with God's favour to them. Or when they doubt whether they have any interest in the promises, because the promises from the aspect of providence appear so unlikely to be fulfilled; the difficulties that are in the way are so many and great. Such doubting arises from want of dependence upon God's almighty power, and His knowledge and wisdom, as infinitely above theirs.

Persons may be greatly to blame for doubting of their state on such grounds as these last mentioned; and they may be to blame that they have no more grace, and no more of the present exercises and experiences of it, to be an evidence to them of the goodness of their state. Men are doubtless to blame for being in a dead carnal frame; but when they are in such a frame, and have no sensible

experience of the exercises of grace, but on the contrary are much under the prevalence of an unchristian spirit, they are not to blame for doubting of their state. It is as impossible, in the nature of things, that a holy and Christian hope should be kept alive in its clearness and strength in such circumstances, as it is to keep the light in the room when the candle is put out; or to maintain the bright sunshine in the air when the sun is gone down. Distant experiences, when darkened by present prevailing lust and corruption, will never keep alive a gracious confidence and assurance; but that sickens and decays upon it, as necessarily as a little child by repeated blows on the head with a hammer.

Nor is it at all to be lamented that persons doubt of their state in such circumstances: but, on the contrary, it is desirable and every way best that they should. It is agreeable to that wise and merciful constitution of things which God hath established that it should be so. For so hath God contrived and constituted things in His dispensations towards His own people, that, when their love decays and the exercises of it fail or become weak, fear should arise; for then they need it to restrain them from sin, and to excite them to care for the good of their souls, and so to stir them up to watchfulness and diligence in religion. But God hath so ordered that, when love rises and is in vigorous exercise, then fear should vanish and be driven away; for then they need it not, having a

higher and more excellent principle in exercise, to restrain them from sin and stir them up to their duty. There are no other principles which human nature is under the influence of, that will ever make men conscientious, but one of these two, *fear* or *love*; and therefore, if one of these should not prevail as the other decayed, God's people, when fallen into dead and carnal frames, when love is asleep, would be lamentably exposed indeed. And therefore God has wisely ordained that these two opposite principles of love and fear should rise and fall, like the two opposite scales of a balance; when one rises the other sinks.

Fear is cast out by the Spirit of God no other way than by the prevailing of love: nor is it ever maintained by His Spirit but when love is asleep. At such a time, in vain is all the saint's self-examinations and poring on past experience in order to establish his peace and get assurance. For it is contrary to the nature of things, as God hath constituted them, that he should have assurance at such a time.

They therefore do directly thwart God's wise and gracious constitution of things, who exhort others to be confident in their hope when in dead frames: under a notion of "*living by faith, and not by sight, and trusting God in the dark, and living upon Christ, and not upon experiences*"; and warn them not to doubt of their good estate, lest they should be guilty of the dreadful sin of unbelief. Vast has been the mischief that has been done this way.

Persons cannot be said to forsake Christ, and live on their experiences of the exercises of grace, merely because they take them and use them as evidences of grace; for there are no other evidences that they can or ought to take. But then may persons be said to live upon their experiences when they make a righteousness of them, and, instead of keeping their eye on God's glory and Christ's excellency, turn their eyes off these objects without them on to themselves, to entertain their minds by viewing their own attainments. This is living on experiences and not on Christ, and is more abominable in the sight of God than the gross immoralities of those who make no pretences to religion.

But, to return from this digression, I would mention one thing more under the general head that I am upon.

XII. Nothing can be certainly concluded concerning the nature of religious affections, from this, *that the outward manifestations of them, and the relation persons give of them, are very affecting and pleasing to the truly godly, and such as greatly gain their charity and win their hearts.*

The true saints have not such a spirit of discerning, that they can certainly determine who are godly and who are not. For, though they know experimentally what true religion is in the internal exercises of it, yet these are what they can neither feel nor see in the heart of another. There is nothing in others that comes within their view,

but outward manifestations and appearances; but the Scripture plainly intimates that this way of judging what is in men by outward appearances is at best uncertain and liable to deceit. "*The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.*" They commonly are but poor judges and dangerous counsellors in soul cases, who are quick and peremptory in determining persons' states, vaunting themselves in their extraordinary faculty of discerning and distinguishing in these great affairs; as though all was open and clear to them. They betray one of these three things: either that they have had but little experience; or are persons of a weak judgment; or have a great degree of pride and self-confidence, and so ignorance of themselves. Wise and experienced men will proceed with great caution in such an affair.

When there are many probable appearances of piety in others, it is the duty of the saints to receive them cordially into their charity, and to love them and rejoice in them as their brethren in Christ Jesus. But yet the best of men may be deceived when the appearances seem to them exceeding fair and bright, even so as entirely to gain their charity and conquer their hearts.

It has been a common thing in the Church of God for such bright professors that are received as eminent saints among the saints, to fall away and come to nothing. Men may have religious affections of many kinds together; they may have a

sort of affection towards God, that bears a great resemblance of dear love to Him; and so a kind of love to the brethren, and great appearances of admiration of God's perfections and works, and sorrow for sin, and reverence, submission, self-abasement, gratitude, joy, religious longings, and zeal for the interest of religion and the good of souls. And these affections may come after great awakenings and convictions of conscience; and may be carried to a great height, and may cause abundance of tears; and may be attended with many sweet texts of Scripture and precious promises, brought with great impression on their minds; and may dispose them to abound in the external duties of religion, such as prayer, hearing the word preached, singing, and religious conference; and these things may be attended with a great resemblance of a Christian assurance in its greatest height—when the saints mount on eagles' wings above all darkness and doubting.

I think it has been made plain that there may be all these things, and yet there be nothing more than the common influences of the Spirit of God, joined with the delusions of Satan and the wicked and deceitful heart. To which I may add, that all these things may be attended with a sweet natural temper, and a good doctrinal knowledge of religion, and a long acquaintance with the saints' way of talking and of expressing their affections and experiences, and a natural ability and subtlety in accommodating their expressions and manner of

speaking to the dispositions and the notions of the hearers, and a taking decency of expression and behaviour formed by a good education. How great therefore may the resemblance be, as to all outward expressions and appearances, between a hypocrite and a true saint! Doubtless it is the glorious prerogative of the omniscient God, as the great Searcher of hearts, to be able well to separate between sheep and goats. And what an indecent self-exaltation and arrogance it is in poor fallible dark mortals, to pretend that they can determine and know who are really sincere and upright before God and who are not!

A true saint greatly delights in holiness; it is a most beautiful thing in his eyes; and God's work, in savingly renewing and making holy and happy a poor and before-perishing soul, appears to him a most glorious work. No wonder, therefore, that his heart is touched and greatly affected, when he hears another give a probable account of this work wrought on his own heart, and when he sees in him probable appearances of holiness: whether those pleasing appearances have anything real to answer them or no. And if he uses the same words which are commonly made use of to express the affections of true saints, and tells of many things following one another in an order agreeable to the method of the experience of him that hears him, and also speaks freely and boldly and with an air of assurance, no wonder that the other thinks his experiences harmonise with his own. And if, besides

all this, in giving his relation he speaks with much affection; and, above all, if in speaking he seems to show much affection to him to whom he speaks —such an affection as the Galatians did to the Apostle Paul—these things will naturally have a powerful influence to affect and draw his hearer's heart, and open wide the doors of his charity towards him. David speaks as one who had felt Ahithophel's talk and had once a sweet savour and relish of it. And therefore exceeding great was his surprise and disappointment when he fell; it was almost too much for him. *"It was not an enemy —then I could have borne it—but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance: we took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."*

It is with professors of religion, especially such as become so in a time of outpouring of the Spirit of God, as it is with the blossoms in the spring. There are vast numbers of them upon the trees, which all look fair and promising; but yet very many of them never come to anything. And many of those that in a little time wither up and drop off and rot under the trees, yet for a while look as beautiful and gay as others; and not only so, but smell sweet and send forth a pleasant odour; so that we cannot by any of our senses certainly distinguish those blossoms which have in them that secret virtue, which will afterwards appear in the fruit, and that inward solidity and strength which shall enable them to bear, and cause them to be

perfected by the hot summer sun, that will dry up the others. It is the mature fruit which comes afterwards, and not the beautiful colours and smell of the blossom, that we must judge by.

I know of no directions or counsels which Christ ever delivered more plainly than the rules He has given us to guide us in our judging of others' sincerity, namely, that we should judge of the tree chiefly by the fruit. But yet this will not do, but other ways are found out which are imagined to be more distinguishing and certain. And woful have been the mischievous consequences of this arrogant setting up men's wisdom above the wisdom of Christ. I believe many saints have gone much out of the way of Christ's Word in this respect: and some of them have been chastised with whips and (I had almost said) scorpions, to bring them back again.

In the Parable of the Wheat and Tares it is said, "*When the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.*" As though the tares were not discerned nor distinguishable from the wheat until then, as Mr. Flavel observes. And then he adds, "How difficult soever it be to discern the difference between wheat and tares, yet doubtless the eye of sense can much easier discriminate them, than the most quick and piercing eye of man can discern the difference between special and common grace."

As it is the ear of the fruit which distinguishes the wheat from the tares, so this is the true

Shibboleth that He, who stands as Judge at the passages of Jordan, makes use of to distinguish those that shall pass over Jordan into the true Canaan from those that should be slain at the passages. For the Hebrew word *Shibboleth* signifies an ear of corn. And perhaps the more full pronunciation of Jephthah's friends, *Shibboleth*, may represent a full ear with fruit in it, typifying the fruits of the friends of Christ, the antitype of Jephthah; and the more lean pronunciation of the Ephraimites, his enemies, may represent their empty ears, typifying the show of religion in hypocrites without substance and fruit.

We seem to be taught the same things by the rules given for the priest's discerning the leprosy. In many cases it was impossible for the priest to determine whether a man had the leprosy or whether he were clean, by the most narrow inspection of the appearances that were upon him, until he had waited to see what the appearances would come to, and had shut up the person who showed himself to him one seven days after another. And when he judged, he was to determine by the hair which grew out of the spot that was showed him, which was, as it were, the fruit that it brought forth.

And here, before I finish what I have to say under this head, I would say something to a strange notion some have of late been led away with, of certainly knowing the good estate that others are in as though it were immediately revealed to

them from heaven, by their love flowing out to them in an extraordinary manner. They argue thus, that their love being very sensible and great, it may be certainly known by them who feel it to be a true Christian love: and if it be a true Christian love, the Spirit of God must be the Author of it: and inasmuch as the Spirit of God, who knows certainly whether others are the children of God or no, and is a Spirit of truth, is pleased by an uncommon influence upon them to cause their love to flow out, in an extraordinary manner, towards such a person as a child of God, it must needs be that this infallible Spirit who deceives none knows that that person is a child of God.

But I would ask them whether or no it is not their duty to love all such as they are bound to think are the children of God, from all that they can see in them, to a very great degree, though God, from other things which He sees that are out of sight to them, knows them not to be so. It is men's duty to love all whom they are bound in charity to look upon as the children of God, with a vastly dearer affection than they commonly do. As we ought to love Christ to the utmost capacity of our nature, so it is our duty to love those who, we think, are so near and dear to Him as His members with an exceeding dear affection, as Christ has loved us; and therefore it is sin in us not to love them so. We ought to pray to God that He would by His Spirit keep us from sin and enable us to do our duty: and may not His Spirit answer

our prayers and enable us to do our duty, in a particular instance, without lying? Surely God is so sovereign as that comes to, that He may enable us to do our duty when He pleases and on what occasion He pleases. When persons think others are His children, God may have other ends in causing their exceedingly endeared love to flow out to them, besides revealing to them whether their opinion of them be right or no. He may have that merciful end in it, to enable them to do their duty, and to keep them from that dreadful infinite evil—sin. And will they say God shall not show them that mercy in such a case? If I am at a distance from home, and hear that in my absence my house is burnt, but my family have in some extraordinary manner all escaped the flames; and everything in the circumstances of the story, as I hear it, makes it appear very credible, it would be sin in me, in such a case, not to feel a very great degree of gratitude to God, though the story indeed be not true. And is not God so sovereign that He may, if He pleases, show me that mercy on that occasion, and enable me to do my duty in a much further degree than I used to do it, and yet not incur the charge of deceitfulness in confirming a falsehood?

It is exceeding manifest that error or mistake may be the occasion of a gracious exercise, and consequently an influence of the Spirit of God, by this—"*He that eateth to the Lord he eateth, and giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.*" The apostle is

speaking of those who, through erroneous and needless scruples, avoided eating legally unclean meats. By this it is very evident that there may be true exercises of grace, a true respect to the Lord, and particularly a true thankfulness, which may be occasioned both by an erroneous judgment and practice. And, consequently, an error may be the occasion of those truly holy exercises that are from the infallible Spirit of God.

And how arrogant must the notion be that they have, who imagine they can certainly know others' godliness, when that great Apostle Peter pretends not to say any more concerning Silvanus, than that he was *a faithful brother, as he supposed!* Though this Silvanus appears to have been a very eminent minister of Christ, and an evangelist, and a famous light in God's Church at that day, and an intimate companion of the apostles.

PART III

SHOWING WHAT ARE DISTINGUISHING SIGNS OF TRULY GRACIOUS AND HOLY AFFECTIONS.

I COME now to the second thing appertaining to the trial of religious affections which was proposed,—To take notice of some things wherein those affections that are spiritual and gracious do differ from those that are not so.

But, before I proceed directly to the distinguishing characters, I would previously mention some things which I desire may be observed concerning the marks I shall lay down.

1. I am far from undertaking to give such signs of gracious affections as shall be sufficient to enable any certainly to distinguish true affections from false in others; or to determine positively which of their neighbours are true professors and which are hypocrites. In so doing, I should be guilty of that arrogance which I have been condemning. Though it be plain that Christ has given rules to all Christians to enable them to judge of professors of

religion whom they are concerned with, so far as is necessary for their own safety, and to prevent their being led into a snare by false teachers and false pretenders to religion; and though it be also beyond doubt that the Scriptures do abound with rules which may be very serviceable to ministers, in counselling and conducting souls committed to their care in things appertaining to their spiritual and eternal state, yet it is also evident that it was never God's design to give us any rules by which we may certainly know who of our fellow-professors are His, and to make a full and clear separation between sheep and goats; but that, on the contrary, it was God's design to reserve this to Himself as His prerogative.

2. No such things are to be expected, that shall be sufficient to enable those saints certainly to discern their own good estate who are very low in grace, or such as have much departed from God and are fallen into a dead, carnal, and unchristian frame. It is not agreeable to God's design (as has been already observed) that such should know their good estate; nor is it desirable that they should, but, on the contrary, every way best that they should not; and we have reason to bless God that He has made no provision that such should certainly know the state they are in, any other way than by first coming out of the ill frame and way they are in.

There is a twofold defect in that saint who is very low in grace or in an ill frame, which makes it

impossible for him to know certainly that he has true grace, by the best signs and rules which can be given him.

First.—There is a defect in the object or the qualification to be viewed and examined. I do not mean an essential defect, because I suppose the person to be a real saint; but a defect in degree. Grace, being very small, cannot be clearly and certainly discerned and distinguished.

Things that are very small—we cannot clearly discern their form, or distinguish them one from another: though, as they are in themselves, their form may be very different. There is doubtless a great difference between the body of man and the bodies of other animals, in the first conception in the womb: but yet, if we should view the different embryos, it might not be possible for us to discern the difference by reason of the imperfect state of the object; but, as it comes to greater perfection, the difference becomes very plain. Another defect attending the grace of those of whom I am speaking is its being mingled with so much corruption, which clouds and hides it and makes it impossible for it certainly to be known. Though different things that are before us may have in themselves many marks thoroughly distinguishing them one from another, yet, if we see them only in a thick smoke, it may nevertheless be impossible to distinguish them. A fixed star is easily distinguishable from a comet in a clear sky; but, if we view them through a cloud, it may be impossible to see the difference.

When true Christians are in an ill frame, guilt lies on the conscience; which will bring fear, and so prevent the peace and joy of an assured hope.

Secondly.—There is in such a case a defect in the eye. As the feebleness of grace and prevalence of corruption obscure the object, so they enfeeble the sight. They darken the sight as to spiritual objects, of which grace is one. Sin is like some distempers of the eyes that make things to appear of different colours from those which properly belong to them: and like many other distempers that put the mouth out of taste, so as to disenable from distinguishing good and wholesome food from bad, but everything tastes bitter. Men in a corrupt and carnal frame have their spiritual senses in but poor plight for judging and distinguishing spiritual things.

For these reasons, no signs that can be given will actually satisfy persons in such a case. Let the signs that are given be never so good and infallible, and clearly laid down, they will not serve them. It is like giving a man rules how to distinguish visible objects in the dark. The things themselves may be very different, and their difference may be very well and distinctly described to him; yet all is insufficient to enable him to distinguish them, because he is in the dark. And therefore many persons in such a case spend time in a fruitless labour, in poring on past experiences, and examining themselves by signs they hear laid down from the pulpit or that they read in books, when there is other work for them to do, that is much more

expected of them, which while they neglect, all their self-examinations are like to be in vain, if they should spend never so much time in them. The accursed thing is to be destroyed from their camp, and Achan to be slain; and until this be done they will be in trouble.

It is not God's design that men should obtain assurance in any other way than by mortifying corruption, and increasing in grace, and obtaining the lively exercises of it. And, although self-examination be a duty of great use and importance and by no means to be neglected, yet it is not the principal means by which the saints do get satisfaction of their good estate. Assurance is not to be obtained so much by *self-examination* as by *action*. The Apostle Paul sought it chiefly this way, even by "*forgetting the things that were behind, and reaching forth unto those things that were before.*" The swiftness of his pace did more towards his assurance of a conquest, than the strictness of his examination. *Giving all diligence* to grow in grace is the direction that the Apostle Peter gives us, for "*making our calling and election sure,*" signifying to us that without this our eyes will be dim, and we shall be as men in the dark that cannot plainly see things past or to come—either the forgiveness of our sins past or our heavenly inheritance that is future and far off.

3. Nor is there much encouragement, in the experience of present or past times, to lay down rules or marks to distinguish between true and false affections, in hopes of convincing any considerable

number of that sort of hypocrites who have been deceived with great false discoveries and affections, and are once settled in a false confidence and high conceit of their own supposed great experiences and privileges. Such hypocrites are so conceited of their own wisdom, and so blinded and hardened with a very great self-righteousness (but very subtle and secret, under the disguise of great humility), that it usually signifies nothing at all to lay before them the most convincing evidences of their hypocrisy. Their state is indeed deplorable, and next to those that have committed the unpardonable sin. Some of this sort of persons seem to be most out of the reach of means of conviction and repentance. But yet the laying down good rules may be a means of preventing such hypocrites, and of convincing many of other kinds of hypocrites: and God is able to convince even this kind, and His grace is not to be limited, nor means to be neglected. And besides, such rules may be of use to the true saints, to detect false affections which they may have mingled with true; and be a means of their religion's becoming more pure, and like gold tried in the fire.

Having premised these things, I now proceed directly to take notice of those things in which true religious affections are distinguished from false.

I.

Affections that are truly spiritual and gracious

do arise from those influences and operations on the heart, which are spiritual, supernatural, and divine.

I will explain what I mean by these terms, whence will appear their use to distinguish between those affections which are spiritual and those which are not so.

We find that true saints, or those persons who are sanctified by the Spirit of God, are in the New Testament called spiritual persons. And their being spiritual is spoken of as their peculiar character, and that wherein they are distinguished from those who are not sanctified. This is evident, because those who are spiritual are set in opposition to natural men and carnal men. "*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things.*" The Scripture explains itself to mean an ungodly man, or one that has no grace, by a natural man. Thus the Apostle Jude, speaking of certain ungodly men that had crept in unawares among the saints, "*These are sensual, having not the Spirit.*" This the apostle gives as a reason why they behaved themselves in such a wicked manner as he had described. Here the word translated *sensual* in the original is *Psychikoi*; which is the very same that in those verses in First Corinthians is translated *natural.* If by natural and carnal, in these texts, is intended unsanctified, then doubtless by spiritual, which is opposed thereto, is meant sanctified and gracious.

And as the saints are called spiritual in Scripture, so we also find that there are certain properties, qualities, and principles, that have the same epithet given them. So we read of a *spiritual mind*, and of *spiritual wisdom*, and of *spiritual blessings*.

Now, it may be observed that the epithet *spiritual*, in these and other parallel texts of the New Testament, is not used to signify any relation of persons or things to the spirit or soul of man, as the spiritual part of man in opposition to the body which is the material part. Qualities are not said to be spiritual, because they have their seat in the soul and not in the body. For there are some properties that the Scripture calls *carnal* or *fleshly*, which have their seat as much in the soul as those properties that are called *spiritual*. Thus it is with pride and self-righteousness and a man's trusting to his own wisdom, which the apostle calls *fleshly*. Nor are things called spiritual, because they are conversant about those things that are immaterial and not corporeal. For so was the wisdom of the wise men and princes of this world conversant about spirits and immaterial beings; whom yet the apostle speaks of as natural men, totally ignorant of those things that are spiritual. But it is with relation to the Holy Ghost, or Spirit of God, that persons or things are termed spiritual in the New Testament. *Spirit*, as the word is used to signify the Third Person in the Trinity, is the substantive, of which is formed the adjective *spiritual* in the Holy Scriptures. Thus Christians are called

spiritual persons because they are born of the Spirit, and because of the indwelling and holy influences of the Spirit of God in them. And things are called spiritual as related to the Spirit of God.

And it must be here observed that, although it is with relation to the Spirit of God and His influences that persons and things are called spiritual, yet not all those persons who are subject to any kind of influence of the Spirit of God are ordinarily called spiritual in the New Testament. They who have only the common influences of God's Spirit are not so called, but only those who have the special, gracious, and saving influences of God's Spirit. Not by men's having the gifts of the Spirit, but by their having the virtues of the Spirit, they were called spiritual. Those qualifications are said to be spiritual, in the language of the New Testament, which are truly gracious and holy and peculiar to the saints.

So that, although natural men may be the subjects of many influences of the Spirit of God, yet they are not, in the sense of the Scripture, spiritual persons: neither are any of those effects, common gifts, qualities, or affections, that are from the influence of the Spirit of God upon them, called spiritual things. The great difference lies in these two things:—

1. The Spirit of God is given to the true saints to dwell in them as His proper lasting abode; and to influence their hearts as a principle of new nature, or as a divine supernatural spring of life

and action. The Scriptures represent the Holy Spirit not only as moving and occasionally influencing the saints, but as dwelling in them as His temple, His proper abode, and everlasting dwelling-place. And He is represented as being so united to the faculties of the soul, that He becomes there a principle or spring of new nature and life.

They do not only drink living water, but this "*living water becomes a well or fountain of water*" in the soul, "*springing up into spiritual and everlasting life.*" The light of the Sun of Righteousness does not only shine upon them, but is so communicated to them that they shine also, and become little images of that Sun which shines upon them. The sap of the True Vine is not only conveyed into them, as the sap of a tree may be conveyed into a vessel, but is conveyed as sap is from a tree into one of its living branches, where it becomes a principle of life. The Spirit of God being thus communicated and united to the saints, they are properly denominated from Him and are called *spiritual.*

On the other hand, though the Spirit of God may many ways influence natural men, yet because He is not thus communicated to them as an indwelling principle, they do not derive any denomination or character from Him; for, there being no union, He is not their own. The light may shine upon a body that is very dark or black; and, though that body be the subject of the light, yet, because the light becomes no principle of light in it so as to cause

the body to shine, hence that body does not properly receive its denomination from it, so as to be called a lightsome body. So the Spirit of God acting upon the soul only, without communicating Himself to be an active principle in it, cannot denominate it spiritual. A body that continues black may be said not to have light, though the light shines upon it: so natural men are said *not to have the Spirit.*

2. Another reason why the saints and their virtues are called spiritual—which is the principal thing—is, that the Spirit of God, dwelling as a vital principle in their souls, there produces those effects wherein He exerts and communicates Himself in His own proper nature. Holiness is the nature of the Spirit of God, therefore He is called in Scripture the Holy Ghost. Holiness, which is as it were the beauty and sweetness of the divine nature, is as much the proper nature of the Holy Spirit, as heat is the nature of fire, or sweetness was the nature of that holy anointing oil which was the principal type of the Holy Ghost in the Mosaic dispensation. The Spirit of God so dwells in the hearts of the saints that He there, as a seed or spring of life, exerts and communicates Himself, in this His sweet and divine nature, making the soul a partaker of God's beauty and Christ's joy, so that the saint has truly fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, in thus having the communion or participation of the Holy Ghost. The grace which is in the hearts of the saints is of

the same nature with the divine holiness, as much as it is possible for that holiness to be which is infinitely less in degree,—as the brightness that is in a diamond which the sun shines upon is of the same nature with the brightness of the sun, but only that it is as nothing to it in degree. Therefore Christ says, "*That which is born of the Spirit is spirit*";—the grace that is begotten in the hearts of the saints is something of the same nature with that Spirit, and so is properly called a spiritual nature.

But the Spirit of God never influences the minds of natural men after this manner. Though He may influence them many ways, yet he never, in any of His influences, communicates Himself to them in His own proper nature. Indeed He never acts disagreeably to His nature, either on the minds of saints or sinners: but the Spirit of God may act upon men agreeably to His own nature, and not exert His proper nature in the acts and exercises of their minds. The Spirit of God may act so, that His actions may be agreeable to His nature, and yet may not at all communicate Himself in His proper nature, in the effect of that action. Thus, for instance, the Spirit of God *moved upon the face of the waters*, and there was nothing disagreeable to His nature in that action; but yet He did not at all communicate Himself in that action; there was nothing of the proper nature of the Holy Spirit in that motion of the waters. And so He may act upon the minds of men many ways, and not com-

municate Himself any more than when He acts on inanimate things.

Thus not only the manner of the relation of the Spirit, who is the Operator, to the subject of His operations is different; but the influence and operation itself is different, and the effect wrought exceeding different. There is no work so high and excellent, for there is no work wherein God doth so much communicate Himself, and wherein the mere creature hath in so high a sense a participation of God; so that it is expressed in Scripture by the saints "*being made partakers of the divine nature,*" and "*having God dwelling in them, and they in God,*" and "*having Christ in them,*" "*being the temples of the living God,*" "*living by Christ's life,*" "*being made partakers of God's holiness,*" "*having Christ's love dwelling in them,*" "*having his joy fulfilled in them,*" "*seeing light in God's light, and being made to drink of the river of God's pleasures.*"

Not that the saints are made partakers of the essence of God, and so are *godded* with God and *christed* with Christ, according to the abominable and blasphemous language and notions of some heretics. But, to use the Scripture phrase, they are *made partakers of God's fulness,* that is, of God's spiritual beauty and happiness, according to the measure and capacity of a creature. Grace in the hearts of the saints being therefore the most glorious work of God, wherein He communicates of the goodness of His nature, it is doubtless His peculiar work, and in an eminent manner above

the power of all creatures. And the influences of the Spirit of God in this, being thus peculiar to God, and being those wherein God does, in so high a manner, communicate Himself and make the creature partaker of the divine nature,—this is what I mean by those influences that are divine, when I say that "truly gracious affections do arise from those influences that are spiritual and divine."

A natural man has no experience of any of those things that are spiritual. He is so far from it that he knows nothing about them, he is a perfect stranger to them, the talk about such things is all foolishness and nonsense to him, he knows not what it means. To the like purpose Christ teaches us that the world is wholly unacquainted with the Spirit of God. "*Even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not neither knoweth him.*" And it is further evident that natural men have nothing in them of the same nature with the true grace of the saints, because the apostle teaches us that those of them who go farthest in religion have no *charity* or true Christian love. And the Scripture speaks of the actual being of a gracious principle in the soul, though in its first beginning, as a seed there planted, as inconsistent with a man's being a sinner. And natural men are represented as having no spiritual light, no spiritual life, and no spiritual being; and therefore conversion is often compared to opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, and a work of creation

(wherein creatures are made entirely new), and becoming newborn children.

From these things it is evident that those gracious influences which the saints are the subjects of, and the effects of God's Spirit which they experience, are entirely above nature, altogether of a different kind from anything that men find within themselves by nature, or only in the exercise of natural principles; and are things which no improvement of those qualifications or principles that are natural, no advancing or exalting them to higher degrees, and no kind of composition of them, will ever bring men to. And this is what I mean by supernatural, when I say that gracious affections are from those influences that are supernatural.

Hence it follows that, in those gracious exercises and affections which are wrought in the minds of the saints through the saving influences of the Spirit of God, there is a new inward perception or sensation of their minds, entirely different in its nature and kind from anything that ever their minds were the subjects of before they were sanctified. For, doubtless, if God by His mighty power produces something that is new, not only in degree and circumstances but in its whole nature, and that which could be produced by no exalting, varying, or compounding of what was there before, or by adding anything of the like kind,—I say, if God produces something thus new in a mind, that is a perceiving, thinking, conscious thing, then something entirely new is felt or perceived or

thought; or, which is the same thing, there is some new sensation or perception of the mind, which is entirely of a new sort, and which could be produced by no exalting, varying, or compounding of that kind of perceptions or sensations which the mind had before; or there is what some metaphysicians call a new simple idea.

If grace be, in the sense above described, an entirely new kind of principle, then the exercises of it are also entirely a new kind of exercises. And if there be in the soul a new sort of exercises which it is conscious of, which the soul knew nothing of before, and which no improvement, composition, or management of what it was before conscious or sensible of could produce, or anything like it; then it follows that the mind has an entirely new kind of perception or sensation. And here is, as it were, a new spiritual sense that the mind has, or a principle of a new kind of perception or spiritual sensation, which is in its whole nature different from any former kinds of sensation of the mind, as tasting is diverse from any of the other senses; and something is perceived by a true saint, in the exercise of this new sense of mind, in spiritual and divine things, as entirely diverse from anything that is perceived in them by natural men, as the sweet taste of honey is diverse from the ideas men get of honey by only looking on it and feeling of it. And because this spiritual sense is immensely the most noble and excellent, and that without which all other principles of percep-

tion and all our faculties are useless and vain; therefore the giving this new sense, with the blessed fruits and effects of it in the soul, is compared to a raising the dead and to a new creation.

This new spiritual sense and the new dispositions that attend it are no new faculties, but are new principles of nature. I use the word principles for want of a word of a more determinate signification. By a principle of nature in this place, I mean that foundation which is laid in nature, either old or new, for any particular manner or kind of exercise of the faculties of the soul; or a natural habit, or foundation for action, giving a person ability and disposition to exert the faculties in exercise of such a certain kind; so that to exert the faculties in that kind of exercises may be said to be his nature. So this new spiritual sense is not a new faculty of understanding, but it is a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of understanding. So that new and holy disposition of heart that attends this new sense is not a new faculty of will, but a foundation laid in the nature of the soul for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of will.

The Spirit of God, in all His operations upon the minds of natural men, only moves, impresses, assists, improves, or some way acts upon natural principles; but gives no new spiritual principle.

Thus the Spirit of God by His common influences may assist men's natural ingeniosity, as

He assisted Bezaleel and Aholiab in the curious works of the tabernacle. So He may assist men's natural abilities in political affairs, and improve their courage and other natural qualifications, as He is said to have put His Spirit on the seventy elders, and on Saul so as to give him another heart. So God may greatly assist natural men's reason, in their reasoning about secular things or about the doctrines of religion, and may greatly advance the clearness of their apprehensions and notions of things of religion in many respects, without giving any spiritual sense. So, in those awakenings and convictions that natural men may have, God only assists conscience, which is a natural principle, to do that work in a further degree which it naturally does. Conscience naturally gives men an apprehension of right and wrong, and suggests the relation there is between right and wrong, and a retribution: the Spirit of God assists men's consciences to do this in a greater degree, helps conscience against the stupefying influence of worldly objects and their lusts. And so there are many other ways might be mentioned wherein the Spirit acts upon, assists, and moves natural principles; but, after all, it is no more than nature moved, acted, and improved; here is nothing supernatural and divine. But the Spirit of God in His spiritual influences on the hearts of His saints operates by infusing or exercising new, divine, and supernatural principles; principles which are indeed a new and spiritual

nature, and principles vastly more noble and excellent than all that is in natural men.

From what has been said it follows that all spiritual and gracious affections are attended with and do arise from some apprehension, idea, or sensation of mind, which is in its whole nature different, yea exceeding different, from all that is or can be in the mind of a natural man; and which the natural man discerns nothing of, and has no manner of idea of, and conceives of no more than a man without the sense of tasting can conceive of the sweet taste of honey, or a man without the sense of hearing can conceive of the melody of a tune, or a man born blind can have a notion of the beauty of the rainbow.

But here two things must be observed in order to the right understanding of this.

1. On the one hand, it must be observed that not everything, which in any respect appertains to spiritual affections, is new and entirely different from what natural men can conceive of and do experience. Some things are common to gracious affections with other affections; many circumstances, appendages, and effects are common. Thus a saint's love to God has a great many things appertaining to it, which are common with a man's natural love to a near relation. Love to God makes a man have desires of the honour of God, and a desire to please Him; so does a natural man's love to his friend make him desire his honour, and desire to please him. Love to

God causes a man to delight in the thoughts of God, and to delight in the presence of God, and to desire conformity to God and the enjoyment of God; and so it is with a man's love to his friend. And many other things might be mentioned which are common to both. But yet that idea which the saint has of the loveliness of God, and that sensation, and that kind of delight he has in that view, which is as it were the marrow and quintessence of his love, is peculiar and entirely diverse from anything that a natural man has or can have any notion of.

And even in those things that seem to be common, there is something peculiar. Both spiritual and natural cause desires after the object beloved; but they be not the same sort of desires. There is a sensation of soul in the spiritual desires of one that loves God, which is entirely different from all natural desires. Both spiritual love and natural love are attended with delight in the object beloved; but the sensations of delight are not the same, but entirely and exceedingly diverse. Natural men may have conceptions of many things about spiritual affections; but there is something in them, which is as it were the nucleus or kernel of them, that they have no more conceptions of than one born blind has of colours.

It may be clearly illustrated by this: we will suppose two men; one is born without the sense of tasting, the other has it. The latter loves honey and is greatly delighted in it, because he

knows the sweet taste of it; the other loves certain sounds and colours. The love of each has many things that appertain to it which are common — it causes both to desire and delight in the object beloved, and causes grief when it is absent. But yet that idea or sensation which he who knows the taste of honey has of its excellency and sweetness, that is the foundation of his love, is entirely different from anything the other has or can have; and that delight which he has in honey is wholly diverse from anything that the other can conceive of, though they both delight in their beloved objects. So both those persons may in some respects love the same object: the one may love a delicious kind of fruit, which is beautiful to the eye and of a delicious taste; not only because he has seen its pleasant colours but knows its sweet taste; the other, perfectly ignorant of this, loves it only for its beautiful colours. There are many things seen, in some respect, to be common to both; both love, both desire, and both delight; but the love and desire and delight of the one is altogether diverse from that of the other.

2. On the other hand, it must be observed that a natural man may have those religious apprehensions and affections, which may be in many respects very new and surprising to him, and what before he did not conceive of; and yet, if what he experiences be nothing like the exercises of a principle of new nature or the sensations of

a new spiritual sense, his affections may be very new by extraordinarily moving natural principles, in a very new degree, and with a great many new circumstances, and a new co-operation of natural affections, and a new composition of ideas;—this may be from some extraordinary powerful influence of Satan and some great delusion; but there is nothing but nature extraordinarily acted. As if a poor man that had always dwelt in a cottage, and had never looked beyond the obscure village where he was born, should in a jest be taken to a magnificent city and prince's court, and there arrayed in princely robes, and set in the throne, with the crown royal on his head, peers and nobles bowing before him, and should be made to believe that he was now a glorious monarch; the ideas he would have and the affections he would experience would in many respects be very new, and such as he had no imagination of before; but all is no more than only extraordinarily raising and exciting natural principles, and newly exalting, varying, and compounding such sort of ideas as he has by nature. Here is nothing like giving him a new sense.

Upon the whole, I think it is clearly manifest that all truly gracious affections do arise from special and peculiar influences of the Spirit, working that sensible effect or sensation in the souls of the saints which is entirely different from all that is possible a natural man should experience, — not only different in degree and

circumstances but different in its whole nature; so that a natural man not only cannot experience that which is individually the same, but cannot experience anything but what is exceeding diverse, and immensely below it, in its kind.

Now, therefore, to apply these things to the purpose of this discourse.

Hence it appears that impressions which some have made on their imagination, or the imaginary ideas which they have of God or Christ or heaven or anything appertaining to religion, have nothing in them that is spiritual or of the nature of true grace. Though such things may attend what is spiritual and be mixed with it, yet in themselves they have nothing that is spiritual, nor are they any part of gracious experience.

Many who have had such things have very ignorantly supposed them to be of the nature of spiritual discoveries. They have had lively ideas of some external shape and beautiful form of countenance; and this they call spiritually seeing Christ. Some have had impressed upon them ideas of a great outward light; and this they call a spiritual discovery of God's or Christ's glory. Some have had ideas of Christ's hanging on the Cross and His blood running from His wounds; and this they call a spiritual sight of Christ crucified and the way of salvation by His blood. Some have seen Him with His arms open ready to embrace them; and this they call a discovery of the sufficiency of Christ's

grace and love. Some have had lively ideas of heaven, and of Christ on His throne there, and shining ranks of saints and angels; and this they call seeing heaven opened to them. Some, from time to time, have had a lively idea of a Person of a beautiful countenance smiling upon them; and this they call a spiritual discovery of the love of Christ to their souls, and tasting the love of Christ. And they look upon it a sufficient evidence that these things are spiritual discoveries, and that they see them spiritually, because they say they do not see these things with their bodily eyes but in their hearts; for they can see them when their eyes are shut. And, in like manner, the imaginations of some have been impressed with ideas of the sense of hearing. They have had ideas of words as if they were spoke to them, sometimes they are the words of Scripture and sometimes other words. They have had ideas of Christ's speaking comfortable words to them. These things they have called having the inward call of Christ, hearing the voice of Christ spiritually in their hearts, having the witness of the Spirit, and the inward testimony of the love of Christ.

The common, and less considerate and understanding, sort of people are the more easily led into apprehensions that these things are spiritual things, because, spiritual things being invisible and not things that can be pointed forth with the finger, we are forced to use figurative expressions in speaking of them, and to borrow names from

external and sensible objects to signify them by. Persons hearing these often used, and having pressed upon them the necessity of *having their eyes opened*, and *having a discovery of spiritual things*, and *seeing Christ in His glory*, and *having the inward call*, and the like, they ignorantly look and wait for some such external discoveries and imaginary views as have been spoken of; and when they have them are confident that now their eyes are opened, now Christ has discovered Himself to them and they are His children; and hence are exceedingly affected and elevated with their deliverance and happiness, and many kinds of affections are at once set in a violent motion in them.

But it is exceeding apparent that such ideas have nothing in them which is spiritual and divine, in the sense wherein it has been demonstrated that all gracious experiences are spiritual and divine. These external ideas are in no wise of such a sort, that they are entirely diverse from all that men have by nature, and vastly above any sensation which it is possible a man should have by any natural sense or principle, so that, in order to have them, a man must have a new spiritual and divine sense given him. So far from this, they are ideas of the same sort which we have by the external senses, that are some of the inferior powers of the human nature. They are merely ideas of external objects, or ideas of the same outward sensitive kind; the same sort of sensations of mind (differing not in degree but only in circumstances), that we

have by those natural principles which are common to us with the beasts, namely, the five external senses. This is a low, miserable notion of spiritual sense, to suppose that it is only a conceiving or imagining that sort of ideas which we have by our animal senses, which senses the beasts have in as great perfection as we. It is, as it were, a turning Christ, or the divine nature in the soul, into a mere animal.

There is nothing wanting in the soul as it is by nature to render it capable of being the subject of all these external ideas, without any new principles. A natural man is capable of having an idea, and a lively idea, of shapes and colours and sounds when they are absent, and as capable as a regenerate man is: so there is nothing supernatural in them. And it is known by abundant experience that it is not the advancing or perfecting human nature, which makes persons more capable of having such lively and strong imaginary ideas, but that, on the contrary, the weakness of body and mind makes persons abundantly more susceptive of such impressions.

As to a truly spiritual sensation, not only is the manner of its coming into the mind extraordinary, but the sensation itself is totally diverse from all that men have, or can have, in a state of nature, as has been shown. But as to these external ideas, though the way of their coming into the mind is sometimes unusual, yet the ideas in themselves are not the better for that; they are still of no different sort from what men have by their senses; they are of no higher kind nor a whit better. For instance,

the external idea a man has now of Christ hanging on the Cross, and shedding His blood, is no better in itself than the external idea that the Jews His enemies had, who stood round His Cross and saw this with their bodily eyes. The imaginary idea which men have now of an external brightness and glory of God is no better than the idea the wicked congregation in the wilderness had of the external glory of the Lord at Mount Sinai, when they saw it with their bodily eyes; or any better than that idea which millions of reprobates will have of the external glory of Christ at the Day of Judgment, who shall have a very lively idea of ten thousand times greater external glory than ever yet was conceived in any man's imagination. Yea, the image of Christ, which men conceive in their imaginations, is not in its own nature of any superior kind to the idea the Papists conceive of Christ, by the beautiful and affecting images of Him which they see in their churches (though the way of their receiving the idea may not be so bad); nor are the affections they have, if built primarily on such imaginations, any better than the affections raised in ignorant people by the sight of those images, which oftentimes are very great; especially when these images, through the craft of the priests, are made to move and speak and weep, and the like.

Merely the way of persons receiving these imaginary ideas does not alter the nature of the ideas themselves that are received. Let them be received in what way they will, they are still but

external ideas, or ideas of outward appearances, and so are not spiritual. Yea, if men should actually receive such external ideas by the immediate power of the Most High God upon their minds, they would not be spiritual—they should be no more than a common work of the Spirit of God; as is evident in the instance of Balaam, who had impressed on his mind by God Himself a clear and lively outward representation or idea of Jesus Christ, as "*the Star rising out of Jacob, when he heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, and saw the vision of the Almighty*"; but yet had no manner of spiritual discovery of Christ. That Day-star never rose in his heart.

And as these external ideas have nothing divine or spiritual in their nature, and nothing but what natural men without any new principles are capable of; so there is nothing in their nature which requires that peculiar, inimitable and unparalleled exercise of the glorious power of God, in order to their production, which it has been shown there is in the production of true grace. They may be raised only by impressions made on the body, by moving the animal spirits, and impressing the brain. Abundant experience does certainly show that alterations in the body will excite imaginary or external ideas in the mind; as often in case of a high fever or of melancholy. These external ideas are as much below the more intellectual exercises of the soul, as the body is a less noble part of man than the soul.

And it is certain that the devil can excite and often hath excited such ideas. They were external ideas which he excited in the dreams and visions of the false prophets of old, who were under the influence of lying spirits. And they were external ideas that he often excited in the minds of the heathen priests, magicians and sorcerers, in their visions and ecstasies. And they were external ideas that he excited in the mind of the Man Christ Jesus, when he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world with the glory of them, when those kingdoms were not really in sight.

Almighty power is no more requisite to represent the shape of man to the imagination than the shape of anything else—though it be of a very beautiful human body, with a sweet smile in his countenance, or arms open, or blood running from hands and feet and side. The power and skill which can well and exactly paint a straw or a stick of wood on a piece of paper or canvas, the same in kind, only perhaps further improved, will be sufficient to paint the body of a man with great beauty and in royal majesty, or a magnificent city, paved with gold, full of brightness, and a glorious throne. The same sort of power that can put ink upon paper can put on leaf-gold. So that it is evident to a demonstration, if we suppose it to be in the devil's power to make any sort of external representation at all on the fancy (as without doubt it is, and never anyone questioned it who believed there was a devil that had had any agency with

mankind); I say, if so, it is demonstrably evident that a created power may extend to all kinds of external appearances and ideas in the mind.

These imaginations do oftentimes raise the carnal affections of men to an exceeding great height: and no wonder, when the subjects of them have an ignorant but undoubting persuasion that they are divine manifestations, which the great JEHOVAH immediately makes to their souls, therein giving them testimonies in an extraordinary manner of His high and peculiar favour.

Again, it is evident that the immediate suggesting of the words of Scripture to the mind has nothing in it which is spiritual.

As the suggesting words of Scripture to the mind is only the exciting in the mind ideas of certain sounds or letters, so it is only one way of exciting ideas in the imagination; for sounds and letters are external things, that are the objects of the external senses of seeing and hearing. Ideas of certain marks upon paper, such as any of the twenty-four letters, in whatever order, or any sounds of the voice, are as much external ideas as of any other shapes or sounds whatsoever. And therefore, by what has been already said concerning these external ideas, it is evident they are nothing spiritual; and, if at any time the Spirit of God suggests these letters or sounds to the mind, this is a common and not any special or gracious influence of that Spirit. And therefore it follows that those affections which have this

effect for their foundation are no spiritual or gracious affections.

But let it be observed what it is that I say, namely: when this effect—even the immediate and extraordinary manner of words of Scripture coming to the mind—is that which excites the affections, and is properly the foundation of them, then these affections are not spiritual. It may be so that persons may have gracious affections going with Scriptures which come to their minds, and the Spirit of God may make use of those Scriptures to excite them—when it is some spiritual sense, taste, or relish they have of the divine and excellent things contained in those Scriptures, that is the thing which excites their affections, and not the extraordinary and sudden manner of words being brought to their minds. They are affected with the instruction they receive from the words, and the view of the glorious things of God or Christ, and things appertaining to Them, that they contain and teach; and not because the words came suddenly, as though some person had spoke them to them, thence concluding that God did as it were immediately speak to them.

Oftentimes persons are exceedingly affected on this foundation: the words of some great and high promises of Scripture came suddenly to their minds, and they look upon the words as directed immediately by God to them, as though the words that moment proceeded out of the mouth of God as spoken to them. So that they take it as a voice

from God, immediately revealing to them their happy circumstances, and promising such and such great things to them; and this it is that affects and elevates them. There is no new spiritual understanding of the divine things contained in the Scripture, or new spiritual sense of the glorious things taught in that part of the Bible, going before their affection, and being the foundation of it. All the new understanding they have, or think they have, to be the foundation of their affection, is this, that the words are spoke to them because they come so suddenly and extraordinarily. And so this affection is built wholly on the sand; because it is built on a conclusion for which they have no foundation.

Persons who have their affections thus raised, if they should be enquired of whether they have any new sense of the excellency of things contained in those Scriptures, would probably say Yes without hesitation: but it is true no otherwise than thus, that, when they have taken up that notion that the words are spoken immediately to them, that makes them seem sweet to them, and they own the things which these Scriptures say to them for excellent things and wonderful things.

As, for instance, supposing these were the words which were suddenly brought to their minds, *Fear not, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom,* they have confidently taken up a notion that the words were, as it were, immediately spoken from heaven to them, as an immediate

revelation that God was their Father and had given the kingdom to them. They are greatly affected by it, and the words seem sweet to them; and *oh*, they say, *they are excellent things that are contained in those words!* But the reason why the promise seems excellent to them is only because they think it is made to them immediately. All the sense they have of any glory in them is only from self-love, and from their own imagined interest in the words; not that they had any view or sense of the holy and glorious nature of the kingdom of heaven, and the spiritual glory of that God who gives it, and His excellent grace to sinful men in offering and giving them this kingdom of His own good pleasure, preceding their imagined interest in these things, and their being affected by them, and being the foundation of their affection and hope of an interest in them.

The first comfort of many persons, and what they call their conversion, is after this manner: after awakening and terrors, some comfortable sweet promise comes suddenly and wonderfully to their minds; and the manner of its coming makes them conclude it comes from God to them; and this is the very thing that is all the foundation of their faith and hope and comfort. Hence they take their first encouragement to trust in God and in Christ, because they think that God by some Scripture so brought has now already revealed to them that He loves them, and has already promised them eternal life; which is very absurd. For

everyone of common knowledge of the principles of religion knows that it is God's manner to reveal His love to men, and their interest in the promises, after they have believed and not before; because they must first believe before they have any interest in the promises to be revealed.

The Spirit of God is a Spirit of truth and not of lies. He does not bring Scriptures to men's minds to reveal to them that they have an interest in God's favour and promises when they have none, having not yet believed; which would be the case, if God's bringing texts of Scripture to men's minds, to reveal to them that their sins were forgiven, or that it was God's pleasure to give them the kingdom, or anything of that nature, went before and was the foundation of their first faith. There is no promise of the covenant of grace belongs to any man, until he has first believed in Christ; for it is by faith alone that we become interested in Christ and the promises of the new covenant made in Him. And therefore whatever spirit applies the promises of that covenant to a person who has not first believed, as being already his, must be a lying spirit; and that faith which is first built on such an application of promises is built upon a lie.

True faith is built on no precarious foundation. But a determination that the words of such a particular text were, by the immediate power of God, suggested to the mind at such a time, is wholly an uncertain and precarious determination; and therefore is a false and sandy foundation for

faith; and accordingly that faith which is built upon it is false. The only certain foundation, which any person has to believe that he is invited to partake of the blessings of the Gospel, is that the Word of God declares that persons so qualified as he is are invited, and God who declares it is true and cannot lie. If a sinner be once convinced of the veracity of God, and that the Scriptures are His Word, he will need no more to satisfy him that he is invited. For the Scriptures are full of invitations to sinners—to the chief of sinners—to come and partake of the benefits of the Gospel. He will not want any new speaking of God to him; what He hath spoken already will be enough with him.

As the first comfort of many persons and their affections at the time of their supposed conversion are built on such grounds as these which have been mentioned, so are their joys and hopes and other affections from time to time afterwards. Thus they imagine a kind of conversation is carried on between God and them; and that God from time to time does, as it were, immediately speak to them, and satisfies their doubts, and testifies His love to them, and promises them supports and supplies and His blessing in such and such cases, and reveals to them clearly their interest in eternal blessings. And thus they are often elevated, and have a course of a sudden and tumultuous kind of joys, mingled with a strong confidence and high opinion of themselves; when, indeed, the main ground of these joys and this confidence is not

anything contained in or taught by these Scriptures, as they lie in the Bible, but the manner of their coming to them; which is a certain evidence of their delusion. There is no particular promise in the Word of God that is the saint's, or is any otherwise made to him or spoken to him than all the promises of the covenant of grace are his, and are made to him and spoken to him; though it be true that some of these promises may be more peculiarly adapted to his case than others, and God by His Spirit may enable him better to understand some than others, and to have a greater sense of the preciousness and glory and suitableness of the blessings contained in them.

But here some may be ready to say: What! is there no such thing as any particular spiritual application of the promises of Scripture by the Spirit of God? I answer, there is doubtless such a thing as a spiritual and saving application of the invitations and promises of Scripture to the souls of men. But it is also certain that the nature of it is wholly misunderstood by many persons, to the great ensnaring of their own souls, and the giving Satan a vast advantage against them and against the interest of religion and the Church of God. The spiritual application of a Scripture promise does not consist in its being immediately suggested to the thoughts by some extrinsic agent, and being borne into the mind with this strong apprehension that it is particularly spoken at that time. A truly spiritual application of the Word of God is

of a vastly higher nature; as much above the devil's power, as it is so to apply the Word of God to a dead corpse as to raise it to life, or to a stone to turn it into an angel.

A spiritual application of the Word of God consists in applying it to the heart, in spiritually enlightening and sanctifying influences. A spiritual application of an invitation or offer of the Gospel consists in giving the soul a spiritual sense or relish of the holy and divine blessings offered, and also of the sweet and wonderful grace of the Offerer in making so gracious an offer, and of His holy excellency and faithfulness to fulfil what He offers, and His glorious sufficiency for it; so leading and drawing forth the heart to embrace the offer; and thus giving the man evidence of his title to the thing offered. And so a spiritual application of the promises of Scripture, for the comfort of the saints, consists in enlightening their minds to see the holy excellency and sweetness of the blessings promised, and also the holy excellency of the Promiser and His faithfulness and sufficiency; thus drawing forth their hearts to embrace the Promiser and thing promised: and by this means giving the sensible actings of grace, enabling them to see their grace, and so their title to the promise. An application not consisting in this divine sense and enlightening of the mind, but consisting only in the Word's being borne into the thoughts, as if immediately then spoken, so making persons believe on no other foundation that the promise is

theirs, is a blind application, and belongs to the spirit of darkness and not of light.

Again, it plainly appears from what has been demonstrated that no revelation of secret facts by immediate suggestion is anything spiritual and divine, in that sense wherein gracious effects and operations are so.

By secret facts I mean things that have been done, or are come to pass, or shall hereafter come to pass, which are secret in that sense that they do not appear to the senses, nor are known by any argumentation, or any evidence to reason, nor any other way, but only by that revelation by immediate suggestion of the ideas of them to the mind. Thus, for instance, if it should be revealed to me that next year this land would be invaded by a fleet from France, or that such and such persons would then be converted, or that I myself should then be converted; not by enabling me to argue out these events from anything which now appears in providence, but immediately suggesting and bearing in upon my mind in an extraordinary manner the apprehension or ideas of these facts, with a strong suggestion or impression on my mind, that I had no hand in myself, that these things would come to pass:—or if it should be revealed to me that this day there is a battle fought between the armies of such and such Powers in Europe; or that such a prince in Europe was this day converted, or is now in a converted state having been converted formerly, or that one of my neighbours

is converted, or that I myself am converted; not by having any other evidence of any of these facts from which I argue them, but an immediate extraordinary suggestion or excitation of these ideas and a strong impression of them upon my mind: this is a revelation of secret facts by immediate suggestion, as much as if the facts were future. For the facts being past or present or future alters not the case, as long as they are secret and hidden from my senses and reason, and not spoken of in Scripture, nor known by me any other way than by immediate suggestion.

It is evident that this revelation of secret facts by immediate suggestion has nothing of the nature of a spiritual and divine operation. There is nothing at all in the nature of the perceptions or ideas themselves, which are excited in the mind, that is divinely excellent, and so far above all the ideas of natural men; though the manner of exciting the ideas be extraordinary. In those things which are spiritual, as has been shown, not only the manner of producing the effect but the effect wrought is divine, and so vastly above all that can be in an unsanctified mind.

And as to the extraordinary manner of producing the ideas or perception of facts, by immediate suggestion, there is nothing in it but what the minds of natural men, while they are yet natural men, are capable of, as is manifest in Balaam and others spoken of in the Scripture. And therefore it appears that there is nothing appertaining to

this immediate suggestion of secret facts that is spiritual, in the sense in which it has been proved that gracious operations are so. If there be nothing in the ideas themselves which is holy and divine, and so nothing but what may be in a mind not sanctified, then God can put them into the mind by immediate power without sanctifying it. As there is nothing in the idea of a rainbow that is of a holy and divine nature, and nothing hinders but that an unsanctified mind may receive that idea; so God, if He pleases, and when He pleases, immediately and in an extraordinary manner, may excite that idea in an unsanctified mind. So also, as there is nothing in the idea or knowledge that such and such particular persons are forgiven and accepted of God, and entitled to heaven, but what unsanctified minds may have and will have concerning many at the Day of Judgment; so God can, if He pleases, extraordinarily and immediately suggest this to and impress it upon an unsanctified mind, now.

Not but that it is possible that such suggestions may be the occasion or accidental cause of gracious affections; for so may a mistake and delusion. But it is never properly the foundation of gracious affections; for gracious affections are all the effects of an influence and operation which is spiritual, supernatural, and divine. But there are many affections, and high affections, which some have, that have such kind of suggestions or revelations for their very foundation. They look upon these

as spiritual discoveries, which is a gross delusion, and this delusion is truly the spring whence their affections flow.

Here it may be proper to observe, that it is exceeding manifest from what has been said that what many persons call *the witness of the Spirit* that they are the children of God, has nothing in it spiritual and divine; and consequently that the affections built upon it are vain and delusive. That which many call the witness of the Spirit is no other than an immediate suggestion and impression of that fact, otherwise secret, that they are converted or made the children of God, and so that their sins are pardoned and that God has given them a title to heaven. This kind of knowledge, — knowing that a certain person is converted and delivered from hell and entitled to heaven, — is no divine sort of knowledge in itself. Abimelech, king of the Philistines, had God's special favour to a particular person, even Abraham, revealed to him. And if a truly good man should have an immediate revelation or suggestion from God, after the like manner, concerning His favour to his neighbour or himself, it would be no higher kind of influence; it would be no more than a common sort of influence of God's Spirit; as the gift of prophecy and all revelation by immediate suggestion is.

This notion greatly debases that high and most exalted kind of influence and operation of the Spirit, which there is in His true witness. That

which is called *the witness of the Spirit* is elsewhere in the New Testament called *the seal of the Spirit,* alluding to the seal of princes, annexed to the instrument by which they advanced any of their subjects to some high honour and dignity or peculiar privilege in the kingdom, as a token of their special favour. Which is an evidence that the influence of the Spirit of the Prince of princes, in sealing His favourites, is far from being of a common kind; and that there is no effect of God's Spirit whatsoever which is in its nature more divine; nothing more holy, peculiar, inimitable, and distinguishing of divinity: as nothing is more royal than the royal seal—nothing more sacred that belongs to a prince, and more peculiarly denoting what belongs to him; it being the very end and design of it to be the most peculiar stamp and confirmation of the royal authority, and great note of distinction whereby that which proceeds from the king may be known from everything else. And therefore, undoubtedly, the seal of the great King of heaven and earth enstamped on the heart is something high and holy in its own nature—some excellent communication from the infinite fountain of divine beauty and glory; and not merely a making known a secret fact by revelation or suggestion; which is a sort of influence of the Spirit of God that the children of the devil have often been the subjects of.

The seal of the Spirit is a kind of effect of the

Spirit of God on the heart, which natural men, while such, are so far from a capacity of being the subjects of, that they can have no manner of notion or idea of it. "*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.*"

What has misled many in their notion of that influence of the Spirit of God is the word *witness.* Hence they have taken it, not to be any effect or work of the Spirit upon the heart, giving evidence from whence men may argue that they are the children of God, but an inward immediate suggestion, as though God inwardly spoke to the man, and testified to him, and told him that he was His child, by a kind of a secret voice or impression: not observing the manner in which the word *witness* or testimony is often used in the New Testament, where such terms often signify, not only a mere declaring and asserting a thing to be true, but holding forth evidence from whence a thing may be argued and proved to be true. Thus God is said to "*bear witness, with signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.*" Now these miracles here spoken of are called God's witness, not because they are of the nature of assertions, but evidences and proofs. So *the water and the blood* are said to *bear witness,* not that they spoke or asserted anything, but they were proofs and evidences.

And when the Scripture speaks of *the seal of*

the Spirit, it is an expression which properly denotes, not an immediate voice or suggestion, but some work or effect of the Spirit that is left as a divine mark upon the soul, to be an evidence by which God's children might be known. The seals of princes were the distinguishing marks of princes. When God sets His seal on a man's heart by His Spirit, there is some holy stamp, some image impressed and left upon the heart by the Spirit, as by the seal upon the wax. And this holy stamp or impressed image, exhibiting clear evidence to the conscience that the subject of it is the child of God, is the very thing which in Scripture is called the seal of the Spirit, and the witness or evidence of the Spirit. And this image enstamped by the Spirit on God's children's hearts is His own image. That is the evidence by which they are known to be God's children—that they have the image of their Father stamped upon their hearts by the Spirit of adoption. Seals anciently had engraven on them two things,—the image and the name of the person whose seal it was. Therefore, when Christ says to His spouse, "*Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm,*" it is as much as to say, Let My name and image remain impressed there. It was the manner of princes of old to have their image engraven on their jewels and precious stones; and the image of Augustus engraven on a precious stone was used as the seal of the Roman emperors in Christ's and the apostles' times. And the saints

are the jewels of Jesus Christ, the great Potentate, who has the possession of the empire of the universe: and these jewels have His image enstamped upon them by His royal signet, which is the Holy Spirit. And this is undoubtedly what the Scripture means by the seal of the Spirit; especially when it is stamped in so fair and clear a manner as to be plain to the eye of conscience, which is what the Scripture calls *our spirit.* This is truly an effect that is spiritual, supernatural, and divine. This is in itself of a holy nature, being a communication of the divine nature and beauty. This is the highest sort of witness of the Spirit which it is possible the soul should be the subject of. If there were any such thing as a witness of the Spirit by immediate suggestion or revelation, this would be vastly more noble and excellent, and as much above it as the heaven is above the earth. This the devil cannot imitate.

Another thing which is a full proof that the seal of the Spirit is no revelation of any fact by immediate suggestion, but is grace itself in the soul, is that the seal of the Spirit is called the *earnest of the Spirit.* Now the earnest is part of the money agreed for, given in hand, as a token of the whole, to be paid in due time; a part of the promised inheritance, granted now, in token of full possession of the whole hereafter. But surely that kind of communication of the Spirit of God, which is of the nature of eternal glory, is the highest and most excellent kind of communi-

cation — something that is in its own nature spiritual, holy, and divine, and far from anything that is common; and therefore high above anything of the nature of inspiration, or revelation of hidden facts by suggestion of the Spirit of God, which many natural men have had. What is the earnest and beginning of glory but grace itself, especially in the more lively and clear exercises of it? It is not prophecy, nor tongues, nor knowledge, but that more excellent divine thing, *charity that never faileth,* which is a prelibation and beginning of the light, sweetness, and blessedness of heaven—that world of love or charity.

It is through the vital communications and indwelling of the Spirit that the saints have all their light, life, holiness, beauty, and joy in heaven: and it is through the vital communications and indwelling of the same Spirit that the saints have all light, life, holiness, beauty, and comfort on earth; but only communicated in less measure. And this vital indwelling of the Spirit in the saints, in this less measure and small beginning, is "*the earnest of the Spirit, the earnest of the future inheritance, and the first-fruits of the Spirit.*" Therefore this earnest and first-fruits, which has been shown to be the same with the seal of the Spirit, is His vital, gracious, sanctifying communication and influence, and not any immediate suggestion or revelation of facts by Him.

And indeed the apostle, when he speaks of the *Spirit's bearing witness with our spirit that we are the*

children of God, does sufficiently explain himself, if his words were but attended to. There are two kinds of spirits he speaks of—the spirit of a slave, or *the spirit of bondage*, that is fear; and the spirit of a child, *or the spirit of adoption*, and that is love. He says, *we have not received the spirit of bondage*, or of slaves, which is a spirit of fear; but we have received the more ingenuous noble spirit of children, a spirit of love which naturally disposes us to go to God as children to a father, and behave towards God as children. And this is the evidence or witness which the Spirit of God gives us that we are children. The spirit of bondage works by fear, the slave fears the rod; but love cries, *Abba, Father*; it disposes us to go to God, and behave ourselves towards God as children; and it gives us clear evidence of our union to God as His children, and so *casts out fear*. So that it appears that the witness of the Spirit the apostle speaks of is far from being any whisper or immediate suggestion or revelation; but that gracious holy effect of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the saints—the disposition and temper of children, appearing in sweet child-like love to God, which casts out fear or a spirit of a slave.

And, whereas the apostle says, "*The Spirit bears witness with our spirits*," by *our spirit* here is meant our conscience, which is called *the spirit of man*. "*The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly*." When Paul speaks of the Spirit of God bearing witness with

our spirit, he is not to be understood of two spirits, that are two separate, collateral, independent witnesses. But it is by one that we receive the witness of the other. The Spirit of God gives the evidence, by infusing and shedding abroad the love of God, the spirit of a child, in the heart; and our spirit, or our conscience, receives and declares this evidence for our rejoicing.

Many have been the mischiefs that have arisen from that false and delusive notion of the witness of the Spirit, that it is a kind of inward voice, suggestion, or declaration from God to man that he is beloved of Him, and pardoned, elected, or the like, sometimes with and sometimes without a text of Scripture. And many have been the false and vain (though very high) affections that have arisen from hence. And it is to be feared that multitudes of souls have been eternally undone by it. I have therefore insisted the longer on this head.

II.

But I proceed now to a second characteristic of gracious affections.

The primary ground of gracious affections, is *the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things, as they are in themselves; and not any conceived relation they bear to self or self-interest.*

I say that the supremely excellent nature of divine things is the first, or primary and original, objective foundation of the spiritual affections of

true saints. For I do not suppose that all relation which divine things bear to themselves, and their own particular interest, is wholly excluded from all influence in their gracious affections. For this may have, and indeed has, a secondary and consequential influence in those affections that are truly holy and spiritual, as I shall show how by and by.

It was before observed that the affection of love is, as it were, the fountain of all affection; and particularly, that Christian love is the fountain of all gracious affections. Now the divine excellency and glory of God, and Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the works of God, and the ways of God, is the primary reason why a true saint loves these things; and not any supposed interest that he has in them, or any conceived benefit that he has received from them or shall receive from them.

Some say that all love arises from self-love; and that it is impossible in the nature of things for any man to have any love to God, or any other being, but that love to himself must be the foundation of it. But I humbly suppose it is for want of consideration that they say so. They argue that whoever loves God, and so desires His glory or the enjoyment of Him, desires these things as his own happiness.

But then they ought to consider a little further, and enquire how the man came to place his happiness in God's being glorified and in contemplating and enjoying God's perfections. There is no doubt but that, after God's glory and the beholding His

perfections are become so agreeable to him that he places his highest happiness in these things, then he will desire them as he desires his own happiness.

If, after a man loves God, and has his heart so united to Him as to look upon God as his chief good and on God's good as his own, it is a consequence and fruit of this that even self-love, or love to his own happiness, will cause him to desire the glorifying and enjoying of God; it will not thence follow that this very exercise of self-love went before his love to God, and that his love to God was a consequence and fruit of that. Something else, entirely distinct from self-love, might be the cause of this—a change made in the views of his mind and relish of his heart, whereby he apprehends a beauty, glory, and supreme good in God's nature as it is in itself. This may be the thing that first draws his heart to Him and causes his heart to be united to Him, prior to all considerations of his own interest or happiness, although after this, and as a fruit of this, he necessarily seeks his interest and happiness in God.

There is such a thing as a kind of love or affection that a man may have towards persons or things, which does properly arise from self-love. A preconceived relation to himself, or some respect already manifested by another to him, or some benefit already received or depended on, is truly the first foundation of his love and what his affection does wholly arise from; and is what precedes any relish of or delight in the nature

and qualities inherent in the being beloved, as beautiful and amiable—as a judge loves and favours a man that has bribed him; or as a man loves another because he looks upon him as his child. When love to another arises thus, it does truly and properly arise from self-love.

That kind of affection to God or Jesus Christ, which does thus properly arise from self-love, cannot be a truly gracious and spiritual love. For self-love is a principle entirely natural, and as much in the hearts of devils as angels; and therefore surely nothing that is the mere result of it can be supernatural and divine. Christ plainly speaks of this kind of love, as what is nothing beyond the love of wicked men. *"If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them."* And the devil himself knew that that kind of respect to God which was so mercenary, as to be only for benefits received or depended on, is worthless in the sight of God; otherwise he never would have made use of such a slander before God against Job. *"Doth Job serve God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him and about his house?"*

It is unreasonable to think otherwise, than that the first foundation of a true love to God is that whereby He is in Himself lovely or worthy to be loved, or the supreme loveliness of His nature. This is certainly what makes Him chiefly amiable. What chiefly makes a man or any creature lovely is his excellency; and so what chiefly renders God

lovely, and must undoubtedly be the chief ground of true love, is His excellency. God's nature or divinity is infinitely excellent; yea, it is infinite beauty, brightness, and glory itself. But how can that be true love of this excellent and lovely nature, which is not built on the foundation of its true loveliness? How can that be true love of beauty and brightness, which is not for beauty and brightness' sake? How can that be a true prizing of that which is in itself infinitely worthy and precious, which is not for the sake of its worthiness and preciousness?

A natural principle of self-love may be the foundation of great affections towards God and Christ, without seeing anything of the beauty and glory of the divine nature. There is a certain gratitude that is a mere natural thing. Gratitude is one of the natural affections of the soul of man, as well as anger; and there is a gratitude that arises from self-love, very much in the same manner that anger does. Anger in men is an affection excited against another, or in opposition to another, for something in him that crosses self-love: gratitude is an affection one has towards another, for loving him or gratifying him, or for something in him that suits self-love. And there may be a kind of gratitude without any true or proper love; as there may be anger without any proper hatred, as in parents towards their children, whom they may be angry with, and yet at the same time have a strong habitual love to them.

And as men, from mere nature, may be thus affected towards men; so they may towards God. There is nothing hinders but that the same self-love may work after the same manner towards God as towards men. And we have manifest instances of it in Scripture; as in the children of Israel who sang God's praises at the Red Sea, but soon forgat God's works; and in Nebuchadnezzar who was greatly affected with God's goodness to him in restoring him to his reason and kingdom, after his dwelling with the beasts.

Gratitude being thus a natural principle, it renders ingratitude so much the more vile and heinous. But that the want of gratitude or natural affection is evidence of a high degree of vice, is no argument that all gratitude and natural affection has the nature of virtue or saving grace.

Self-love, through the exercise of a mere natural gratitude, may be the foundation of a sort of love to God many ways. A kind of love may arise from a false notion of God, that men have been educated in or have some way imbibed; as though He were only goodness and mercy, and not revenging justice; or as though the exercises of His goodness were necessary and not free and sovereign; or as though His goodness were dependent on what is in them, and as it were constrained by them. Men on such grounds as these may love a God of their own forming in their imaginations, when they are far from loving such a God as reigns in heaven.

Again, self-love may be the foundation of an affection in men towards God, through a great insensibility of their state with regard to God, and for want of conviction of conscience to make them sensible how dreadfully they have provoked God to anger. They have no sense of the heinousness of sin as against God, and of the infinite and terrible opposition of the holy nature of God against it. And so, having formed in their minds such a God as suits them, and thinking God to be such an one as themselves, who favours and agrees with them, they may like Him very well and feel a sort of love to Him, when they are far from loving the true God.

Again, a very high affection towards God may, and often does, arise in men, from an opinion of the favour and love of God to them, as the first foundation of their love to Him. After awakenings and distress through fears of hell, they may suddenly get a notion, through some impression on their imagination, or immediate suggestion with or without texts of Scripture, or by some other means, that God loves them and has forgiven their sins and made them His children. And this is the first thing that causes their affections to flow towards God and Jesus Christ; and then, after this and upon this foundation, many things in God may appear lovely to them, and Christ may seem excellent. And if such persons are asked whether God appears lovely and amiable in Himself? they would perhaps readily answer, Yes; when, indeed,

if the matter be strictly examined, this good opinion of God was purchased and paid for in the distinguishing and infinite benefits they imagined they received from God. It is easy for them to own Christ the best in the world, when they are first firm in it, that He, though Lord of the universe, is captivated with love to them, and has His heart swallowed up in them, and prizes them far beyond most of their neighbours, and loved them from eternity, and died for them, and will make them reign in eternal glory with Him in heaven. When this is the case with carnal men, their very lusts will make Him seem lovely; pride itself will prejudice them in favour of that which they call Christ: selfish proud man naturally calls that lovely that greatly contributes to his interest and gratifies his ambition.

Whereas the exercises of true and holy love in the saints arise in another way. They do not first see that God loves them, and then see that He is lovely; but they first see that God is lovely, and that Christ is excellent and glorious, and their hearts are captivated with this view, and the exercises of their love are wont from time to time to begin here; and then, consequentially, they see God's love and great favour to them. In the love of the true saint God is the lowest foundation. But the hypocrite lays himself at the bottom of all as the first foundation, and lays on God as the superstructure.

But these things that I have said do by no means imply that all gratitude to God is a mere natural thing, and that there is no such thing as a spiritual gratitude, which is a holy and divine affection. They imply no more than that there is a gratitude which is merely natural, and that, when persons have their affections towards God only or primarily for benefits received, their affection is only the exercise of a natural gratitude. There is doubtless such a thing as a gracious gratitude, which does greatly differ from all that gratitude which natural men experience. It differs in the following respects:—

1. True gratitude or thankfulness to God for His kindness to us arises from a foundation laid before, of love to God for what He is in Himself; whereas a natural gratitude has no such antecedent foundation. The gracious stirrings of grateful affection to God always are from a stock of love already in the heart, established in the first place on other grounds of God's own excellency; and hence the affections are disposed to flow out on occasions of God's kindness. The saint having seen the glory of God, and being overcome by it, and captivated into a supreme love to Him on that account, his heart hereby becomes tender and easily affected with kindnesses received. If a man has no love to another, yet gratitude may be moved by some extraordinary kindness, as in Saul towards David; but this is not the same kind of thing as a man's gratitude to a dear friend, whom

his heart was before possessed with a high esteem of and love to, and by this means became tender towards him. Self-love is not excluded from a gracious gratitude; the saints love God for His kindness to them. *"I love the Lord because He hath heard the voice of my supplication."* But something else is included; and another love prepares the way and lays the foundation for these grateful affections.

2. In a gracious gratitude men are affected with the attribute of God's goodness and free grace, not only as they are concerned in it or as it affects their interest, but as a part of the glory and beauty of God's nature. That wonderful and unparalleled grace of God, which is manifested in the work of redemption and shines forth in the face of Jesus Christ, is infinitely glorious in itself, and appears so to the angels. It is a great part of the moral perfection and beauty of God's nature. This would be glorious, whether it were exercised towards us or no; and the saint who exercises a gracious thankfulness for it sees it to be so, and delights in it as such; though his concern in it serves the more to engage his mind and raise the affection. Self-love here assists as a handmaid, being subservient to higher principles, to lead forth the mind to the view and contemplation, and engage and fix the attention, and heighten the joy and love.

Some may perhaps be ready to object, against the whole that has been said, that text, *"We love*

him because he first loved us," as though this implied that God's love to the true saints were the first foundation of their love to Him.

In answer to this, I would observe that the apostle's drift in these words is to magnify the love of God to us, from hence that He loved us while we had no love to Him. And that God loved us when we had no love to Him, the apostle proves by this argument that God's love to the elect is the ground of their love to Him. And that it is in three ways: 1. The saints' love to God is the fruit of God's love to them, as it is the gift of that love. God gave them a spirit of love to Him, because He loved them from eternity. 2. The exercises and discoveries that God has made of His wonderful love to sinful men by Jesus Christ, in the work of redemption, are one of the chief manifestations which God has made of the glory of His moral perfection to both angels and men; and so is one main objective ground of the love of both to God—in a good consistence with what was said before. 3. God's love to a particular elect person, discovered by his conversion, is a great manifestation of God's moral perfection and glory to him, and a proper occasion of the excitation of the love of holy gratitude, agreeable to what was before said. And that the saints do in these respects love God, because He first loved them, fully answers the design of the apostle's argument. So that no good argument can be drawn from hence against a spiritual and gracious

love in the saints, arising primarily from the excellency of divine things as they are in themselves, and not from any conceived relation they bear to their interest.

And, as it is with the love of the saints, so it is with their joy and spiritual delight and pleasure. True saints have their minds, in the first place, inexpressibly pleased and delighted with the sweet ideas of the glorious and amiable nature of the things of God. And this is the spring of all their delights and the cream of all their pleasures; it is the joy of their joy.

The first foundation of the delight a true saint has in God is His own perfection; and the first foundation of the delight he has in Christ is His own beauty; He appears in Himself the *chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely.* The way of salvation by Christ is a delightful way to him, for the sweet and admirable manifestations of the divine perfections in it. The holy doctrines of the Gospel, by which God is exalted and man abased, holiness honoured and promoted, sin greatly disgraced and discouraged, and free and sovereign love manifested, are glorious doctrines in his eyes and sweet to his taste, prior to any conception of his interest in these things. Indeed, the saints rejoice in their interest in God and that Christ is theirs, and so they have great reason; but this is not the first spring of their joy. They first rejoice in God as glorious and excellent in Himself, and then secondarily rejoice in it that so glorious

a God is theirs. They first have their hearts filled with sweetness from the view of Christ's excellency, and the excellency of His grace, and the beauty of the way of salvation by Him; and then they have a secondary joy in that so excellent a Saviour and such excellent grace are theirs. But that which is the true saint's superstructure is the hypocrite's foundation. When they hear of the wonderful things of the Gospel—of God's great love in sending His Son, of Christ's dying love to sinners, and the great things Christ has purchased and promised to the saints—and hear these things lively and eloquently set forth, they may hear with a great deal of pleasure and be lifted up with what they hear; but, if their joy be examined, it will be found to have no other foundation than this, that they look upon these things as theirs; all this exalts them. They feel well under such doctrine, and are pleased in the highest degree, in hearing how much God and Christ make of them. So that their joy is really a joy in themselves and not in God.

And because the joy of hypocrites is in themselves, hence it comes to pass that in their rejoicings and elevations they are wont to keep their eye upon themselves. Having received what they call spiritual discoveries or experiences, their minds are taken up about them, admiring their own experiences. What they are principally elevated with is not the glory of God or beauty of Christ, but the beauty of their experiences. They keep thinking

with themselves, What a good experience is this! what a great discovery is this! what wonderful thing have I met with! And so they put their experiences in the place of Christ and His beauty and fulness. Their eyes are off from these things, or at least they view them only as it were sideways. They are feeding their souls, and feasting a selfish principle, with a view of their discoveries: they take more comfort in their discoveries than in Christ discovered.

A true saint, when in the enjoyment of true discoveries of the sweet glory of God and Christ, has his mind too much captivated and engaged by what he views without himself, to stand at that time to view himself and his own attainments. It would be a diversion and loss which he could not bear to take his eye off from the ravishing object of his contemplation, to survey his own experience, and to spend time in thinking with himself what an high attainment this is and what a good story I now have to tell others. Nor does the pleasure and sweetness of his mind at that time chiefly arise from the consideration of the safety of his state, or anything he has in view of his own qualifications, experiences, or circumstances; but from the divine and supreme beauty of what is the object of his direct view without himself, which sweetly entertains and strongly holds his mind.

As the love and joy of hypocrites are all from the source of self-love, so it is with their other affections—their sorrow for sin, their humiliation

and submission, their religious desires and zeal. Everything is as it were paid for beforehand, in God's highly gratifying their self-love and their lusts, by making so much of them and exalting them so highly, as things are in their imagination. It is easy for nature, as corrupt as it is, to love this imaginary God that suits them so well, and to extol Him, and submit to Him, and to be fierce and zealous for Him. The high affections of many are all built on the supposition of their being eminent saints. If that opinion which they have of themselves were taken away, if they thought they were some of the lower form of saints (though they should yet suppose themselves to be real saints), their high affections would fall to the ground. If they only saw a little of the sinfulness and vileness of their own hearts, and their deformity in the midst of their best duties and their best affections, it would knock their affections on the head. Because their affections are built upon self, therefore self-knowledge would destroy them. But as to truly gracious affections, they are built elsewhere. They have their foundation out of self, in God and Jesus Christ; and therefore a discovery of themselves, of their own deformity and the meanness of their experiences, though it will purify their affections will not destroy them, but in some respect sweeten and heighten them.

III.

Those affections that are truly holy are *primarily*

founded on the loveliness of the moral excellency of divine things. Or—to express it otherwise—a love to divine things for the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellency is the first beginning and spring of all holy affections.

Here, for the sake of the more illiterate reader, I will explain what I mean by the moral excellency of divine things.

And it may be observed that the word *moral* is not to be understood here according to the common and vulgar acceptation of the word, when men speak of morality and a moral behaviour, meaning an outward conformity to the duties of the moral law, and especially the duties of the second table; or intending no more at farthest than such seeming virtues as proceed from natural principles, in opposition to those virtues that are more inward, spiritual, and divine. As the honesty, justice, generosity, good nature, and public spirit of many of the heathen are called moral virtues, in distinction from the holy faith, love, humility, and heavenly-mindedness of true Christians. I say, the word *moral* is not to be understood thus in this place.

Divines commonly make a distinction between moral good and evil and natural good and evil. By moral evil they mean the evil of sin, or that evil which is against duty and contrary to what is right and ought to be. By natural evil they do not mean that evil which is properly opposed to duty, but that which is contrary to mere nature, without any respect to a rule of duty. So the evil of suffer-

ing is called natural evil, such as pain and torment, disgrace, and the like. So likewise natural defects are called natural evils, as if a child be monstrous or a fool. On the other hand, by moral evil divines mean the evil of sin, or that which is contrary to what is right; so by moral good they mean that which is contrary to sin, or that good in beings who have will and choice, whereby as voluntary agents they are and act as it becomes them to be and to act, or so as is most fit and suitable and lovely. By natural good they mean that good that is entirely of a different kind from holiness or virtue,—that which perfects or suits nature, considering nature without any relation to any rule or measure of right and wrong.

Thus pleasure is a natural good, so is honour, so is strength, so is speculative knowledge, human learning and policy. The great capacity of the angels, their understandings, strength, and the honourable circumstances they are in as the great ministers of God's kingdom, whence they are called thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, is the natural good which they are possessed of; but their perfect and glorious holiness and goodness, their pure and flaming love to God and to the saints and to one another, is their moral good.

The moral excellency of an intelligent voluntary being is more immediately seated in the heart or will. That intelligent being whose will is truly right and lovely, he is morally good or excellent.

This moral excellency of an intelligent being, when it is true and real, and not only external or merely seeming and counterfeit, is holiness. Holiness comprehends all the true virtue of a good man; his love to God, his gracious love to men, his justice, his charity and bowels of mercies, his gracious meekness and gentleness, and all other true Christian virtues that he has, belong to his holiness. So the holiness of God is the same with the moral excellency of the divine nature, or His purity and beauty as a moral agent, comprehending all His moral perfections, His righteousness, faithfulness, and goodness. As in holy men their charity, Christian kindness, and mercy belong to their holiness, so the kindness and mercy of God belong to His holiness. Holiness in man is but the image of God's holiness. There are not more virtues belonging to the image than are in the Original. Derived holiness has not more in it than is in that underived holiness which is its fountain. There is no more than *grace for grace*, or grace in the image answerable to grace in the Original.

There is thus a twofold image of God in man—His moral or spiritual image which is His holiness (which image was lost by the fall); and God's natural image, consisting in man's reason and understanding, his natural ability, and dominion over the creatures, which is the image of God's natural attributes.

From what has been said, it may easily be understood what I intend, when I say that a love to

divine things for the beauty of their moral excellency is the beginning and spring of all holy affections. It has been already shown that the first objective ground of all holy affections is the supreme excellency of divine things as they are in themselves: I now proceed further, and say more particularly, that that kind of excellency of the nature of divine things, which is the first objective ground of all holy affections, is their moral excellency or their holiness. Holy persons, in the exercise of holy affections, do love divine things primarily for their holiness. They love God, in the first place, for the beauty of His holiness or moral perfection, as being supremely amiable in itself. Not that the saints, in the exercise of gracious affections, do love God only for His holiness; all His attributes are amiable and glorious in their eyes. They delight in every divine perfection; the contemplation of the infinite greatness, power and knowledge, and terrible majesty of God, is pleasant to them. But their love to God for His holiness is what is most fundamental and essential in their love. Here it is that true love to God begins; all other holy love to divine things flows from hence. A love to God for the beauty of His moral attributes leads to and necessarily causes a delight in God for all His attributes. For His moral attributes cannot be without His natural attributes. Infinite holiness supposes infinite wisdom and an infinite capacity and greatness; and all the attributes of God do as it were imply one another.

Yet holiness is in a peculiar manner the beauty of the divine nature. This renders all His other attributes glorious and lovely. It is the glory of God's wisdom that it is a holy wisdom, and not a wicked subtlety and craftiness. This makes His majesty lovely, and not merely dreadful and horrible, that it is a holy majesty. It is the glory of God's immutability that it is a holy immutability, and not an inflexible obstinacy in wickedness.

And therefore it must needs be that a sight of God's loveliness must begin here. A true love to God must begin with a delight in His holiness, and not with a delight in any other attribute. For no other attribute is truly lovely without this, and no otherwise than as (according to our way of conceiving of God) it derives its loveliness from this. Therefore it is impossible that other attributes should appear lovely, in their true loveliness, until this is seen; and it is impossible that any perfection of the divine nature should be loved with true love until this is loved. If the true loveliness of all God's perfections arises from the loveliness of His holiness, then the true love of all His perfections arises from the love of His holiness. They that do not see the glory of God's holiness cannot see anything of the true glory of His mercy and grace. They see nothing of the glory of those attributes as excellences of God's nature, as it is in itself; though they may be affected with them and love them, as they concern their interest.

As the beauty of the divine nature does primarily consist in God's holiness, so does the beauty of all divine things. Herein consists the beauty of the saints, that they are *saints* or *holy ones*: it is the moral image of God in them which is their beauty; and that is their holiness. Herein consists the beauty and brightness of the angels of heaven, that they are holy angels and so not devils. Herein consists the beauty of the Christian religion above all other religions, that it is so holy a religion. Herein consists the excellency of the Word of God, that it is so holy. Herein does primarily consist the amiableness and beauty of the Lord Jesus, whereby He is the *chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely*, even in that He is the Holy One of God. All the spiritual beauty of His human nature,—His meekness, lowliness, patience, heavenliness, love to God, love to men, condescension to the mean and vile, and compassion to the miserable,—all is summed up in His holiness. And the beauty of His divine nature, of which the beauty of His human nature is the image and reflection, does also primarily consist in His holiness. Herein primarily consists the glory of the Gospel, that it is a holy Gospel, and so bright an emanation of the holy beauty of God and Jesus Christ. Herein consists the spiritual beauty of its doctrines, that they are holy doctrines or *doctrines according to godliness*. And herein does consist the spiritual beauty of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, that it is so holy a way. And herein chiefly

consists the glory of heaven, that it is *the holy city*, the *holy Jerusalem*, the *habitation of God's holiness* and so of His glory.

And therefore it is primarily on account of this kind of excellency, that the saints do love all these things. Thus they love the Word of God, because it *is very pure*. It is on this account they love the saints; and on this account chiefly it is that heaven is lovely to them, and those holy tabernacles of God amiable in their eyes. It is on this account that they love God; and on this account primarily it is that they love Christ, and that their hearts delight in the doctrines of the Gospel, and sweetly acquiesce in the way of salvation therein revealed.

I know of no part of the Holy Scriptures, where the nature and evidences of true and sincere godliness are so much of set purpose, and so fully and largely insisted on and delineated, as the 119th Psalm. The Psalmist declares his design in the first verses, and he keeps his eye on this design all along and pursues it to the end. But in this psalm the excellency of holiness is represented as the immediate object of a spiritual taste, relish, appetite, and delight of God's law. That grand expression and emanation of the holiness of God's nature, and prescription of holiness to the creature —is all along represented as the food and entertainment, and as the great object of the love, the appetite, the complacence and rejoicing of the gracious nature. It prizes God's commandments *above gold, yea the finest gold*, and to it they are

sweeter than the honey and honey-comb; and that upon account of their holiness.

A holy nature must needs love that in holy things chiefly which is most agreeable to itself. But surely that in divine things which above all others is agreeable to holy nature, is holiness; because holiness must be above all other things agreeable to holiness. The holy nature of God and Christ, and of the Word of God and other divine things, must be above all other things agreeable to the holy nature that is in the saints.

And again, a holy nature doubtless loves holy things, especially on the account of that for which sinful nature has enmity against them; but that for which chiefly sinful nature is at enmity against holy things, is their holiness. It is for this that *the carnal mind is enmity against God*, and against the law of God, and the people of God. Now it is just arguing from contraries, from contrary causes to contrary effects, from opposite natures to opposite tendencies. We know that holiness is of a directly contrary nature to wickedness. As therefore it is the nature of wickedness chiefly to oppose and hate holiness, so it must be the nature of holiness chiefly to tend to and delight in holiness.

The holy nature in the saints and angels in heaven (where the true tendency of it best appears) is principally engaged by the holiness of divine things. This is the divine beauty which chiefly engages the attention, admiration, and praise of the bright and burning Seraphim. "*One cried unto*

another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory."

And the Scriptures represent the saints on earth as adoring God primarily on this account, and admiring and extolling all God's attributes, either as deriving loveliness from His holiness or as being a part of it. Thus when they praise God for His power, His holiness is the beauty that engages them. "*His right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory.*" So, when they praise Him for His justice and terrible majesty. "*Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.*" So, when they praise God for His mercy and faithfulness. "*Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.*"

By this you may examine your love to God, and to Jesus Christ, and to the Word of God, and your joy in them, and also your love to the people of God, and your desires after heaven—whether they be from a supreme delight in this sort of beauty, without being primarily moved from your imagined interest in them or expectations from them. There are many high affections, great seeming love and rapturous joys, which have nothing of this holy relish belonging to them.

Particularly, by what has been said you may try your discoveries of the glory of God's grace and love, and your affections arising from them. The grace of God may appear lovely two ways: either as *bonum utile,* a profitable good to me,

that which greatly serves my interest, and so suits my self-love; or as *bonum formosum*, a beautiful good in itself, and part of the moral and spiritual excellency of the divine nature. In this latter respect it is that the true saints have their hearts affected, and love captivated, by the free grace of God in the first place.

From the things that have been said, it appears that, if persons have a great sense of the natural perfections of God and are greatly affected with them, or have any other sight or sense of God than that which consists in or implies a sense of the beauty of His moral perfections, it is no certain sign of grace: as particularly, men's having a great sense of the awful greatness and terrible majesty of God. For this is only God's natural perfection, and what men may see, and yet be entirely blind to the beauty of His moral perfection, and have nothing of that spiritual taste which relishes this divine sweetness.

This glory of God all shall behold at the day of Judgment—angels and devils, saints and sinners. Christ will manifest His infinite greatness and awful majesty to everyone in a most open, clear, and convincing manner, and in a light that none can resist, "*when he shall come in the glory of his Father, and every eye shall see him*"; when *they shall cry to the mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the face of him that sits upon the throne.* God will make all His enemies to behold this, and to live in a most clear and affecting view of it, in hell to all eternity.

God hath often declared His immutable purpose to make all His enemies to know Him in this respect, in so often annexing these words to the threatenings He denounces against them, "*And they shall know that I am the Lord.*" They will see His infinite greatness and majesty, His infinite power, and will be fully convinced of His omniscience, and His eternity and immutability. And they will see and know everything appertaining to His moral attributes themselves, but only the beauty and amiableness of them. They will see and know that He is perfectly just and righteous and true; and that He is a holy God, *of purer eyes than to behold evil, who cannot look on iniquity.* And they will see the wonderful manifestations of His infinite goodness and free grace to the saints. There is nothing will be hid from their eyes, but only the beauty of these moral attributes, and that beauty of the other attributes which arises from it. A sight of the awful greatness of God may overpower men's strength and be more than they can endure; but, if the moral beauty of God be hid, the enmity of the heart will remain in its full strength, no love will be enkindled, all will not be effectual to gain the will, but that will remain inflexible. Whereas the first glimpse of the moral and spiritual glory of God shining into the heart produces all these effects as it were with omnipotent power, which nothing can withstand.

The sense that natural men may have of the awful greatness of God may affect them various

ways. It may not only terrify them, but it may elevate them, and raise their joy and praise, as their circumstances may be. This will be the natural effect of it, under the real or supposed receipt of some extraordinary mercy from God, by the influence of mere principles of nature. It has been shown already that the receipt of kindness may, by the influence of natural principles, affect the heart with gratitude and praise to God. But if a person, at the same time that he receives remarkable kindness from God, has a sense of His infinite greatness, and that he is but nothing in comparison of Him, surely this will naturally raise his gratitude and praise the higher, for kindness to one so much inferior. If a natural man, at the same time that he is greatly affected with God's infinite greatness and majesty, entertains a strong conceit that this great God has made him His child and special favourite, and promised him eternal glory in His highest love, this will have a tendency according to the course of nature to raise his joy and praise to a great height.

Therefore it is beyond doubt that too much weight has been laid, by many persons of late, on discoveries of God's greatness, awful majesty, and natural perfection, operating after this manner, without any real view of the holy, lovely majesty of God. And experience does abundantly witness to what reason and Scripture declare; there having been very many persons who have seemed to be overpowered with the greatness and majesty of

God, and consequently elevated in the manner that has been spoken of, who have been very far from having appearances of a Christian spirit and temper in any manner of proportion, or fruits in practice in any wise agreeable; but their discoveries have worked in a way contrary to the operation of truly spiritual discoveries.

Not that a sense of God's greatness and natural attributes is not exceeding useful and necessary. For, as I observed before, this is implied in a manifestation of the beauty of God's holiness. Though that be something beyond it, it supposes it, as the greater supposes the less. And though natural men may have a sense of the natural perfections of God, yet undoubtedly this is more frequent and common with the saints than with natural men. Grace tends to enable men to see these things in a better manner; and not only enables them to see God's natural attributes, but that beauty of those attributes, which (according to our way of conceiving of God) is derived from His holiness.

IV.

Gracious affections do arise *from the mind's being enlightened richly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things.*

Holy affections are not heat without light; but evermore arise from the information of the understanding—some spiritual instruction that the mind receives, some light or actual knowledge. The child of God is graciously affected, because he sees

and understands something more of divine things than he did before, more of God or Christ and of the glorious things exhibited in the Gospel. He has some clearer and better view than he had before, when he was not affected. Either he receives some understanding of divine things that is new to him, or has his former knowledge renewed after the view was decayed. *"Every one that loveth, knoweth God."* *"I pray that your love may abound more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment."*

Now there are many affections which do not arise from any light in the understanding. And when it is thus, it is a sure evidence that these affections are not spiritual, let them be ever so high. Indeed, they have some new apprehensions which they had not before. Such is the nature of man that it is impossible his mind should be affected, unless it be by something that he apprehends or that his mind conceives of. But in many persons those apprehensions or conceptions that they have, wherewith they are affected, have nothing of the nature of knowledge or instruction in them. As, for instance, when a person is affected with a lively idea, suddenly excited in his mind of some shape, or very beautiful pleasant form of countenance, or some shining light, or other glorious outward appearance: here is something apprehended or conceived by the mind. But there is nothing of the nature of instruction in it. Persons become never the wiser by such things, or more knowing about God, or a Mediator between God and man,

or the way of salvation by Christ, or anything contained in any of the doctrines of the Gospel.

Hence, also, it appears that affections arising from texts of Scripture coming to the mind are vain, when no instruction received in the understanding from those texts, or anything taught in those texts, is the ground of the affection, but the manner of their coming to the mind. When Christ makes the Scripture a means of the heart's burning with gracious affection, it is *by opening the Scriptures to their understandings.* It appears also that the affection must be vain, when it is founded on something that is supposed to be taught by the text, which really is not contained in it nor in any other Scripture; because such supposed instruction is not real instruction, but a mistake and misapprehension of the mind. As, for instance, when persons suppose that they are expressly taught by some Scripture coming to their minds, that they are in particular beloved of God, or that their sins are forgiven, that God is their Father, and the like. This is a mistake or misapprehension. For the Scripture nowhere reveals the individual persons who are beloved expressly; but only by consequence, by revealing the qualifications of persons that are beloved of God.

Affections really arise from ignorance, rather than instruction, in these instances which have been mentioned; as likewise in some others that might be mentioned. As some, when they find themselves free of speech in prayer, call it God's

being with them; and this affects them more; and so their affections are set a-going and increased; when they look not into the cause of this freedom of speech, which may arise many other ways besides God's spiritual presence. So some are much affected with some apt thoughts that come into their minds about the Scripture, and call it the Spirit of God teaching them. So they ascribe many of the workings of their own minds, which they have a high opinion of and are pleased and taken with, to the special immediate influences of God's Spirit; and so are mightily affected with their privilege. And there are some instances of persons, in whom it seems manifest that the first ground of their affection is some bodily sensation. The animal spirits are put into such a motion as is wont to be connected with the exhilaration of the mind; and the soul, by the laws of the union of soul and body, feels pleasure. Hence, through ignorance, the person being surprised, begins to think surely this is the Holy Ghost coming into him. And then the mind begins to be affected and raised; there is first great joy, and then many other affections in a very tumultuous manner, putting all nature, both body and mind, into a mighty ruffle. For though, as I observed before, it is the soul only that is the seat of the affections, yet this hinders not but that bodily sensations may be an occasion of affections in the mind.

And, if men's religious affections do truly arise

from some instruction or light in the understanding, yet the affection is not gracious unless the light which is the ground of it be spiritual. Affections may be excited by that understanding of things, which they obtain merely by human teaching, with the common improvement of the faculties of the mind. Men may be much affected by knowledge of things of religion that they obtain this way. As some philosophers have been mightily affected and almost carried beyond themselves, by the discoveries they have made in mathematics and natural philosophy; so men may be much affected from common illuminations of the Spirit of God, in which God assists men's faculties to a greater degree of that kind of understanding of religious matters, which they have by only the ordinary exercise and improvement of their own faculties. Such illuminations may much affect the mind; as in many whom we read of in Scripture that *were once enlightened.* But these affections are not spiritual.

There is such a thing, if the Scriptures are of any use to teach us anything, as a spiritual and supernatural understanding of divine things that is peculiar to the saints, and which those who are not saints have nothing of. It is certainly this kind of understanding, apprehending, or discerning of divine things, which the apostle speaks of. "*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually*

discerned." And that there is such a thing as an understanding of divine things, which in its nature and kind is wholly different from all knowledge that natural men have, is evident from this, that there is an understanding which the Scripture calls spiritual understanding. "*We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*"

From hence it may be surely inferred wherein spiritual understanding consists. For if there be in the saints a kind of apprehension or perception, which is in its nature perfectly diverse from all that natural men have or that it is possible they should have, until they have a new nature, it must consist in their having a certain kind of ideas or sensations of mind, which are simply diverse from all that is or can be in the minds of natural men. And that is the same thing as to say that it consists in the sensations of a new spiritual sense, which the souls of natural men have not. But I have already shown what that new spiritual sense is, which the saints have given them in regeneration, and what is the object of it. I have shown that the immediate object of it is the supreme beauty and excellency of the nature of divine things, as they are in themselves.

From what has been said, therefore, we come necessarily to this conclusion concerning that wherein spiritual understanding consists — that it

consists in "a sense of the heart of the supreme beauty and sweetness of the holiness or moral perfection of divine things, together with all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion, that depends upon and flows from such a sense."

Spiritual understanding consists primarily in a sense of heart of that spiritual beauty. I say, a sense of heart. For it is not speculation merely that is concerned in this kind of understanding. There is a distinction to be made between a mere notional understanding, wherein the mind only beholds things in the exercise of a speculative faculty, and the sense of the heart, wherein the mind does not only speculate and behold but relishes and feels. That sort of knowledge, by which a man has a sensible perception of amiableness and loathsomeness, or of sweetness and nauseousness, is not just the same sort of knowledge with that by which he knows what a triangle is and what a square is. The one is mere speculative knowledge, the other sensible knowledge in which more than the mere intellect is concerned; the heart is the proper subject of it, or the soul as a being that not only beholds but has inclination, and is pleased or displeased. And yet there is the nature of instruction in it; as he that has perceived the sweet taste of honey knows much more about it, than he that has only looked upon and felt of it.

The apostle seems to make a distinction between mere speculative knowledge of the things of re-

ligion and spiritual knowledge, in calling that *the form of knowledge and of the truth*; while the latter is often represented by relishing, smelling, or tasting. "*Now thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place.*"

Spiritual understanding primarily consists in this sense or taste of the moral beauty of divine things; so that no knowledge can be called spiritual, any further than it arises from this and has this in it. But, secondarily, it includes all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion which depends upon and flows from such a sense.

When the true beauty and amiableness of the holiness, or true moral good, that is in divine things is discovered to the soul, it, as it were, opens a new world to its views. This shows the glory of all the perfections of God and of everything appertaining to the divine Being. For, as was observed before, the beauty of all arises from God's moral perfection. This shows the glory of all God's works, both of creation and providence. For it is the special glory of them, that God's holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, and goodness are so manifested in them; and, without these moral perfections, there would be no glory in that power and skill with which they are wrought. By this sense of the moral beauty of divine things is understood the sufficiency of Christ as a Mediator. For it is only by the discovery of the beauty of the

moral perfection of Christ, that the believer is let into the knowledge of the excellency of His Person, so as to know anything more of it than the devils do; and it is only by the knowledge of the excellency of Christ's Person that any know His sufficiency as a Mediator; for the latter depends upon and arises from the former. It is by seeing the excellency of Christ's Person that the saints are made sensible of the preciousness of His blood, and its sufficiency to atone for sin; for therein consists the preciousness of Christ's blood, that it is the blood of so excellent and amiable a Person. And on this depends the meritoriousness of His obedience, and sufficiency and prevalence of His intercession. By this sight of the moral beauty of divine things is seen the beauty of the way of salvation by Christ. For that consists in the beauty of the moral perfections of God, which wonderfully shines forth in every step of this method of salvation from beginning to end. By this is seen the fitness and suitableness of this way; for this wholly consists in its tendency to deliver us from sin and hell, and to bring us to happiness in the possession and enjoyment of moral good, in a way sweetly agreeing with God's moral perfections. By this is seen the excellency of the Word of God. Take away all the moral beauty and sweetness in the Word, and the Bible is left wholly a dead letter—a dry, lifeless, tasteless thing. By this is seen the true foundation of our duty; the worthiness of God to be so esteemed,

honoured, loved, submitted to, and served, as He requires of us; and the amiableness of the duties themselves that are required of us. And by this is seen the true evil of sin. For he who sees the beauty of holiness must necessarily see the hatefulness of sin, its contrary. By this men understand the true glory of heaven, which consists in the beauty and happiness that is in holiness. By this is seen the amiableness and happiness of both saints and angels.

He that sees the beauty of holiness or true moral good sees the greatest and most important thing in the world, which is the fulness of all things, without which all the world is empty—no better than nothing, yea, worse than nothing. Unless this is seen, nothing is seen that is worth the seeing; for there is no other true excellency or beauty. Unless this be understood, nothing is understood that is worthy of the exercise of the noble faculty of understanding. This is the beauty of the Godhead, and the divinity of Divinity (if I may so speak), the good of the infinite Fountain of good; without which God Himself (if that were possible to be) would be an infinite evil; without which we ourselves had better never have been; and without which there had better have been no being. He therefore in effect knows nothing that knows not this. His knowledge is but the shadow of knowledge, or *the form of knowledge,* as the apostle calls it.

Well, therefore, may the Scriptures represent

those who are destitute of that spiritual sense, by which is perceived the beauty of holiness, as totally blind, deaf, and senseless, yea, dead. And well may regeneration, in which this divine sense is given to the soul by its Creator, be represented as opening the blind eyes, and raising the dead, and bringing a person into a new world.

And besides the things that have been already mentioned, there arises from this sense of spiritual beauty a true experimental knowledge of religion, which is of itself as it were a new world of knowledge. He that sees not the beauty of holiness knows not what one of the graces of God's Spirit is; he is destitute of any idea or conception of all gracious exercises of soul, and all holy comforts and delights, and all effects of the saving influences of the Spirit of God on the heart; and so is ignorant of the greatest works of God, the most important and glorious effects of His power upon the creature: and also is wholly ignorant of the saints as saints, he knows not what they are; and in effect is ignorant of the whole spiritual world.

Things being thus, it plainly appears that God's implanting that spiritual supernatural sense makes a great change in a man. And were it not for the very imperfect degree in which this sense is commonly given at first, or the small degree of this glorious light that first dawns upon the soul, the change made by this spiritual opening of the eyes in conversion would be much greater, and more remarkable every way, than if a man, who

had been born blind, and with only the other four senses, should continue so long a time, and then at once should have the sense of seeing imparted to him, in the midst of the clear light of the sun, discovering a world of visible objects. For, though sight be more noble than any of the other external senses, yet this spiritual sense is infinitely more noble than that, or any other principle of discerning that a man naturally has, and the object of this sense infinitely greater and more important.

This sort of understanding is that knowledge of divine things from whence all truly gracious affections do proceed; by which therefore all affections are to be tried. Those affections that arise wholly from any other kind of knowledge, or do result from any other kind of apprehensions of mind, are vain.

From what has been said, may be learned wherein the most essential difference lies between that light or understanding which is given by the common influences of the Spirit of God on the hearts of natural men, and that saving instruction which is given to the saints. The latter, primarily and most essentially, lies in beholding the holy beauty that is in divine things, which is the only true moral good, and which the soul of fallen man is by nature totally blind to. The former consists only in a further understanding, through the assistance of natural principles, of those things which men may know, in some measure, by the alone ordinary exercise of their faculties. Thus, for

instance, in those awakenings and convictions of conscience that natural men are often subject to, the Spirit of God gives no knowledge of the true moral beauty which is in divine things; but only assists the mind to a clearer idea of the guilt of sin, or its relation to a punishment, and connection with the evil of suffering (without any sight of its true moral evil or odiousness as sin), and to a clearer idea of the natural perfections of God, wherein consists not His holy beauty and glory but His awful and terrible greatness. It is a clear sight of this that will fully awaken the consciences of wicked men at the Day of Judgment, without any spiritual light. And it is a lesser degree of the same that awakens the consciences of natural men, without spiritual light in this world.

And in those common illuminations which are sometimes given to natural men, exciting in them some kind of religious desire, love, and joy, the mind is only assisted to a clearer apprehension of the natural good that is in divine things. Thus sometimes, under common illuminations, men are raised with the ideas of the natural good that is in heaven: as its outward glory, its ease, its honour and advancement, a being there the objects of the high favour of God, and the great respect of men and angels. So there are many things exhibited in the Gospel, concerning God and Christ and the way of salvation, that have a natural good in them which suits the natural principle of self-love. All natural men's hatred of sin is as much from principles of

nature, as men's hatred of a tiger for his rapaciousness, or their aversion to a serpent for his poison and hurtfulness. And all their love of Christian virtue is from no higher principle than their love of a man's good nature, which appears amiable to natural men; but no otherwise than silver and gold appear amiable in the eyes of a merchant, or than the blackness of the soil is beautiful in the eyes of the farmer.

From what has been said of the nature of spiritual understanding, it appears that spiritual understanding does not consist in any new doctrinal knowledge, or in having suggested to the mind any new proposition not before read or heard of. For it is plain that this suggesting of new propositions is a thing entirely diverse from giving the mind a new taste or relish of beauty and sweetness. It is also evident that spiritual knowledge does not consist in any new doctrinal explanation of any part of the Scripture. For still this is but doctrinal knowledge, or the knowledge of propositions; the doctrinal explaining of any part of Scripture is only giving us to understand what are the propositions contained or taught in that part of Scripture.

Hence it appears that the spiritual understanding of the Scripture does not consist in opening to the mind the mystical meaning of the Scripture, in its parables, types, and allegories; for this is only a doctrinal explication. He that explains what is meant by the stony ground, and the seeds springing

up suddenly and quickly withering away, only explains what propositions or doctrines are taught in it. So he that explains what is typified by Jacob's ladder, and the angels of God ascending and descending on it, or what was typified by Joshua's leading Israel through Jordan, only shows what propositions are hid in these passages. And many men can explain these types, who have no spiritual knowledge. It is possible that a man might know how to interpret all the types, parables, enigmas, and allegories in the Bible, and not have one beam of spiritual light in his mind; because he may not have the least degree of spiritual sense of the holy beauty of divine things, and may see nothing of this kind of glory in anything contained in any of these mysteries.

From what has been said, it is also evident that it is not spiritual knowledge for persons to be informed of their duty, by having it immediately suggested to their minds that such and such outward actions or deeds are the will of God. If we suppose that it is truly God's manner thus to signify His will to His people by immediate inward suggestions, such suggestions have nothing of the nature of spiritual light. Such kind of knowledge would only be one kind of doctrinal knowledge. A proposition concerning the will of God is as properly a doctrine of religion, as a proposition concerning the nature of God or the work of God. And a having either of these kinds of propositions, or any other proposition, declared to a man, either

by speech or inward suggestion, differs vastly from a having the holy beauty of divine things manifested to the soul, wherein spiritual knowledge does most essentially consist. Thus there was no spiritual light in Balaam, though he had the will of God immediately suggested to him by the Spirit of God from time to time, concerning the way that he should go and what he should do and say.

It is manifest, therefore, that a being led and directed in this manner is not that holy and spiritual leading of the Spirit of God, which is peculiar to the saints and a distinguishing mark of the sons of God. "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.*"

And if persons have the will of God concerning their actions suggested to them by some text of Scripture, suddenly and extraordinarily brought to their minds, which text, as the words lay in the Bible before they came to their minds, related to the action and behaviour of some other person, but they suppose, as God sent the words to them, He intended something further by them and meant such a particular action of theirs ;—I say, if persons should have the will of God thus suggested to them with texts of Scripture, it alters not the case. The suggestion being accompanied with an apt text of Scripture does not make the suggestion to be of the nature of spiritual instruction. As, for instance, if a person in New England, on some occasion, were at a loss whether it was his duty to go into some popish or heathenish land, where he was like to be

exposed to many difficulties and dangers, and should pray to God that He would show him the way of his duty; and after earnest prayer, should have those words which God spake to Jacob suddenly and extraordinarily brought to his mind, as if they were spoken to him: "*Fear not to go down into Egypt; and I will go with thee; and I will also surely bring thee up again.*" In which words, though, as they lay in the Bible before they came to his mind, they related only to Jacob and his behaviour, yet he supposes that God has a further meaning, as they were brought and applied to him;—that thus they are to be understood in a new sense, that by Egypt is to be understood this particular country he has in his mind, and that the action intended is his going thither, and that the meaning of the promise is that God would bring him back into New England again. There is nothing of the nature of a spiritual or gracious leading of the Spirit in this; for there is nothing of the nature of spiritual understanding in it. Thus to understand texts of Scripture is not to have a spiritual understanding of them. Spiritually to understand the Scripture is rightly to understand what is in the Scripture, and what was in it before it was understood: it is to understand rightly what used to be contained in the meaning of it, and not the making a new meaning.

As to a gracious leading of the Spirit, it consists in two things: partly in instructing a person in his duty by the Spirit, and partly in powerfully inducing him to comply with that instruction. But, so

far as the gracious leading of the Spirit lies in instruction, it consists in a person's being guided by a spiritual and distinguishing taste of that which has in it true moral beauty. This holy relish is a thing that discerns and distinguishes between good and evil, between holy and unholy, without being at the trouble of a train of reasoning. As he who has a true relish of external beauty knows what is beautiful by looking upon it; he stands in no need of a train of reasoning about the proportion of the features, in order to determine whether that which he sees be a beautiful countenance or no; he needs nothing but only the glance of his eye. He who has a rectified musical ear knows whether the sound he hears be true harmony; he does not need first to be at the trouble of the reasonings of a mathematician about it. There is a holy beauty and sweetness in words and actions, as well as a natural beauty in countenances and sounds, and sweetness in food. When a holy and amiable action is suggested to the thoughts of a holy soul, that soul, if in the lively exercise of its spiritual taste, at once sees a beauty in it, and so inclines to it and closes with it. On the contrary, if an unworthy unholy action be suggested to it, its sanctified eye sees no beauty in it and is not pleased with it; its sanctified taste relishes no sweetness in it, but, on the contrary, it is nauseous to it. Thus a holy person is led by the Spirit, as he is instructed and led by his holy taste and disposition of heart; whereby, in the lively exercise

of grace, he easily distinguishes good and evil, and knows at once what is a suitable amiable behaviour towards God and towards man, in this case and the other, and judges what is right, as it were spontaneously and of himself, without a particular deduction, by any other arguments than the beauty that is seen and goodness that is tasted. Thus Christ blames the Pharisees that they "*did not even of their ownselves judge what was right,*" without needing miracles to prove it.

There is such a thing as good taste of natural beauty, that is exercised about temporal things, in judging of them; as about the justness of a speech, the goodness of style, the beauty of a poem, the gracefulness of deportment. Now, as there is such a kind of taste of the mind as this, which philosophers speak of, whereby persons judge as it were by the glance of the eye, or by inward sensation, and the first impression of the object; so there is likewise such a thing as a divine taste, given and maintained by the Spirit of God, in the hearts of the saints, whereby they are in like manner led and guided in discerning and distinguishing the true spiritual and holy beauty of actions; and that more easily, readily, and accurately, as they have more or less of the Spirit of God dwelling in them. And thus "*the sons of God are led by the Spirit of God*" in their behaviour in the world.

A holy disposition and spiritual taste, where grace is strong and lively, will enable a soul to

determine what actions are right and becoming Christians, not only more speedily but far more exactly than the greatest abilities without it. This may be illustrated by the manner in which some habits of mind and dispositions of heart, of a nature inferior to true grace, will teach and guide a man in his actions. As, for instance, if a man be a very good-natured man, his good nature will teach him better how to act benevolently amongst mankind, and will direct him on every occasion to those speeches and actions which are agreeable to rules of goodness, than the strongest reason will a man of a morose temper. So if a man's heart be under the influence of an entire friendship and most endeared affection to another, though he be a man of an indifferent capacity, yet this habit of his mind will direct him, far more readily and exactly, to a speech and deportment which shall in all respects be sweet and kind, and agreeable to a benevolent disposition of heart, than the greatest capacity without it. He has, as it were, a spirit within him that guides him. The habit of his mind is attended with a taste by which he immediately relishes that air and mien which is benevolent, and disrelishes the contrary, and distinguishes between one and the other in a moment, more precisely than the most accurate reasonings can find out in many hours. So also will a spirit of love to God, and holy fear and reverence towards God, and filial confidence in God, and a heavenly disposition, teach and guide a man in his behaviour.

It is an exceeding difficult thing for a wicked man, destitute of Christian principles in his heart to guide him, to know how to demean himself like a Christian, with the life and beauty and heavenly sweetness of a truly holy, humble, Christ-like behaviour. He knows not how to put on these garments; neither do they fit him. *"A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart is at his left."*

The saints, in thus judging of actions by a spiritual taste, have not a particular recourse to the express rules of God's Word, with respect to every word and action that is before them, the good or evil of which they thus judge of. But yet their taste itself in general is subject to the rule of God's Word, and must be tried by that and a right reasoning upon it. As a man of a rectified palate judges of particular morsels by his taste; but yet his palate itself must be judged of, whether it be right or no, by certain rules and reasons. But a spiritual taste of soul mightily helps the soul in its reasonings on the Word of God, and in judging of the true meaning of its rules; as it removes the prejudices of a depraved appetite, and naturally leads the thoughts in the right channel, casts a light on the Word, and causes the true meaning most naturally to come to mind, through the harmony there is between the disposition and relish of a sanctified soul and the meaning of the rules of God's Word. Yea, this harmony tends to bring the texts themselves to mind on proper

occasions. God "*teaches them his statutes, and causes them to understand the way of his precepts.*"

But this leading of the Spirit is a thing exceeding diverse from that which some call so; which consists not in teaching them God's statutes and precepts, that He has already given; but in giving them new precepts by immediate inward speech or suggestion; and has in it no tasting the true excellency of things, or judging or discerning the nature of things at all. It is high above it, as the stars are higher than a glow-worm.

What has been said of the nature of spiritual understanding, as consisting most essentially in a divine supernatural sense and relish of the heart, not only shows that there is nothing of it in this falsely supposed leading of the Spirit, but also shows the difference between spiritual understanding and all kinds and forms of enthusiasm—all imaginary sights of God and Christ and heaven, all supposed witnessing of the Spirit, and testimonies of the love of God by immediate inward suggestion, and all impressions of future events and immediate revelations of any secret facts whatsoever. None of these consist in a divine sense and relish of the heart of the holy beauty and excellency of divine things; nor have they anything to do with such a sense; but all consist in impressions in the head. All are impressions on the imagination.

Such sort of experiences and discoveries commonly raise the affections of such as are deluded

by them to a great height, and make a mighty uproar in both soul and body. And a very great part of the false religion that has been in the world, from one age to another, consists in such discoveries as these, and in the affections that flow from them. In such things consisted the experiences of the ancient Pythagoreans among the heathen, and many others among them, who had strange ecstasies and raptures, and pretended to a divine afflatus and immediate revelations from heaven. In such things as these seem to have consisted the experiences of the Essenes, an ancient sect among the Jews at and after the times of the apostles. In such things as these consisted the experiences of many of the ancient Gnostics, and the Montanists, and many other sects of ancient heretics in the primitive ages of the Christian Church. And in such things as these consisted the pretended immediate converse with God and Christ and saints and angels of heaven, of the monks, anchorites, and recluses, that formerly abounded in the Church of Rome. In such things consisted the pretended high experiences and great spirituality of many sects of enthusiasts, that swarmed in the world after the Reformation; such as the Anabaptists, Antinomians, and Familists, the followers of Stork, Müntzer, Becold, David George, Caspar Swenckfield, Henry Nicolas, Johannes Agricola Eislebius; and the many wild enthusiasts that were in England in the days of Oliver Cromwell; and the followers of Mrs.

Hutchison in New England; as appears by the particular and large accounts given of all these sects by that eminently holy man, Mr. Samuel Rutherford, in his *Display of the Spiritual Antichrist.* And in such things as these consisted the experiences of the late French prophets and their followers. And in these things seems to lie the religion of the many kinds of enthusiasts of the present day.

If the revival of true religion be very great in its beginning, yet, if this bastard comes in, there is danger of its doing as Gideon's bastard Abimelech did, who never left until he had slain all his threescore and ten true-born sons, excepting one that was forced to fly. Great and strict, therefore, should be the watch and guard that ministers maintain against such things, especially at a time of great awakening; for men, especially the common people, are easily bewitched with them; they having such a glaring and glistering show of high religion; and the devil hiding his own shame, and appearing as an angel of light, that men may not be afraid of him but may adore him.

The imagination or fancy seems to be that wherein are formed all those delusions of Satan, which those are carried away with who are under the influence of false religion and counterfeit graces and affections. Here is the devil's grand lurking-place, the very nest of foul and delusive spirits. It is very much to be doubted, whether the devil can come at the soul of man at all to affect it, or to

excite any thought or motion, or produce any effect whatsoever in it, any other way than by the fancy, which is that power of the soul by which it receives ideas of outward and sensible things.

And this seems to be the reason why persons that are under the disease of melancholy are commonly so visibly and remarkably subject to the suggestions and temptations of Satan; that being a disease which peculiarly affects the animal spirits, and is attended with weakness of that part of the body which is the fountain of the animal spirits, even the brain, which is, as it were, the seat of the fancy. The brain being thus weakened and diseased, it is less under the command of the higher faculties of the soul, and yields the more easily to extrinsic impressions, and is overpowered by the disordered motions of the animal spirits. And so the devil has greater advantage to affect the mind by working on the imagination. And thus Satan, when he casts in those horrid suggestions into the minds of many melancholy persons in which they have no hand themselves, does it by exciting imaginary ideas, either of some dreadful words or sentences or other horrid outward ideas. And when he tempts other persons who are not melancholy, he does it by presenting to the imagination in a lively and alluring manner the objects of their lusts, or by exciting ideas of words and so by them exciting thoughts; or by promoting an imagination of outward actions, events, circumstances. Innumerable are the ways by which the

mind might be led on to all kind of evil thoughts, by exciting external ideas in the imagination.

If persons keep no guard at these avenues of Satan, by which he has access to the soul to tempt and delude it, they will be likely to have enough of him. And especially if, instead of guarding against him, they lay themselves open to him, and seek and invite him, because he appears as an angel of light, and counterfeits the illuminations and graces of the Spirit of God, by inward whispers and immediate suggestions of facts and events, pleasant voices, beautiful images, and other impressions on the imagination. There are many who are deluded by such things and are lifted up with them, and seek after them, that have a continued course of them and can have them almost when they will; and especially when their pride and vain-glory have most occasion for them, to make a show of them before company. It is with them something as it is with those who are professors of the art of telling where lost things are to be found, by impressions made on their imaginations; they laying themselves open to the devil, he is always at hand to give them the desired impression.

Before I finish what I would say on this head of imaginations, counterfeiting spiritual light, and affections arising from them, I would renewedly (to prevent misunderstanding) desire it may be observed that I am far from determining that no affections are spiritual which are attended with imaginary ideas. Such is the nature of man that

he can scarcely think of anything intensely, without some kind of outward ideas. They arise and interpose themselves unavoidably in the course of a man's thoughts; though oftentimes they are very confused, and are not what the mind regards. When the mind is much engaged and the thoughts intense, oftentimes the imagination is more strong, and the outward idea more lively, especially in persons of some constitutions of body. But there is a great difference between these two things,—lively imaginations arising from strong affections, and strong affections arising from lively imaginations. The former may be, and doubtless often is, in case of truly gracious affections. The affections do not arise from the imagination, nor have any dependence upon it; but, on the contrary, the imagination is only the accidental effect or consequent of the affection, through the infirmity of human nature. But when the latter is the case, as it often is, that the affection arises from the imagination, and is built upon it as its foundation, instead of a spiritual illumination or discovery, then is the affection, however elevated, worthless and vain. And this is the drift of what has been now said, of impressions on the imagination.

V.

Truly gracious affections are attended *with a reasonable and spiritual conviction of the judgment of the reality and certainty of divine things.*

This seems to be implied in the text that was

laid as the foundation of this discourse: "*Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*"

All those who are truly gracious persons have a solid, full, thorough, and effectual conviction of the truth of the great things of the Gospel. I mean that they no longer halt between two opinions; the great doctrines of the Gospel cease to be any longer doubtful things, or matters of opinion which, though probable, are yet disputable. With them they are points settled and determined, as undoubted and indisputable; so that they are not afraid to venture their all upon their truth. Their conviction is an effectual conviction; so that the great, spiritual, mysterious, and invisible things of the Gospel have the influence of real and certain things upon them; they have the weight and power of real things in their hearts; and accordingly rule in their affections, and govern them through the course of their lives.

That all true Christians have such a kind of conviction of the truth of the things of the Gospel, is abundantly manifest from the Holy Scriptures. I will mention a few places of many. "*But whom say ye that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona:—my Father which is in heaven hath revealed it unto thee.*" "*Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*" "*Now they have known*

that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee." "We having the spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us."

There are many religious affections, which are not attended with such a conviction of the judgment. There are many apprehensions and ideas which some have, that they call divine discoveries, which are affecting but not convincing. Though for a little they may seem to be more persuaded of the truth of the things of religion than they used to be, and may yield a forward assent, like many of Christ's hearers who believed for a while, yet they have no thorough and effectual conviction. Nor is there any great abiding change in them in this respect, that, whereas formerly they did not realise the great things of the Gospel, now these things, with regard to reality and certainty, appear new to them, and they behold them quite in another view than they used to do. Because their affections are not attended with a thorough conviction of the mind, they are not at all to be depended on. However great a show and noise

they make, it is like the blaze of tow, or crackling of thorns, or like the forward flourishing blade on stony ground, that has no root nor deepness of earth to maintain its life.

Some persons, under high affections and a confident persuasion of their good estate, have that which they very ignorantly call a seeing of the truth of the Word of God, and which is very far from it. They have some texts of Scripture coming to their minds in a sudden and extraordinary manner, immediately declaring unto them (as they suppose) that their sins are forgiven, or that God loves them and will save them; and, it may be, have a chain of Scriptures coming one after another to the same purpose; and they are convinced that it is truth. They are confident that it is certainly so, that their sins are forgiven and God does love them. They say they know it is so; and, when the words of Scripture are suggested, and as they suppose immediately spoken to them by God, they are ready to cry out, "Truth, truth! it is certainly so! the Word of God is true!" And this they call a seeing the truth of the Word of God.

Whereas the whole of their faith amounts to no more than only a strong confidence of their own good estate, and so a confidence that these words are true which they suppose tell them they are in a good estate; when indeed (as was shown before) there is no Scripture which declares that any person is in a good estate directly, or any other way than by consequence. So that this, instead

of being a real sight of the truth of the Word of God, is a sight of nothing but a phantom, and is all over a delusion. Truly to see the truth of the Word of God, is to see the truth of the Gospel; which is the glorious doctrine the Word of God contains concerning God and Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation by Him, and the world of glory that He has entered into and purchased for all them who believe; and not a revelation that such and such particular persons are true Christians and shall go to heaven. Therefore those affections which arise from no other persuasion of the truth of the Word of God than this, arise from delusion and not true conviction.

But, if the religious affections that persons have do indeed arise from a strong persuasion of the truth of the Christian religion, their affections are not the better, unless their persuasion be a reasonable persuasion or conviction. By a reasonable conviction, I mean a conviction founded on real evidence, or upon that which is a good reason or just ground of conviction. Men may have a strong persuasion that the Christian religion is true, when their persuasion is not at all built on evidence, but altogether on education and the opinion of others; as many Mahometans are strongly persuaded of the truth of the Mahometan religion, because their fathers and neighbours and nation believe it. And though the thing believed happens to be better, yet that does not make the belief itself to be of a better sort; for, though the thing believed is true,

yet the belief of it is not owing to this truth but to education.

But, if that belief of Christian doctrines, which persons' affections arise from, be not merely from education, but indeed from reasons and arguments which are offered, it will not from thence necessarily follow that their affections are truly gracious. For, in order to that, it is requisite not only that the belief which their affections arise from should be a reasonable, but also a spiritual belief or conviction. I suppose none will doubt but that some natural men do yield a kind of assent of their judgment to the truth of the Christian religion, from the rational proofs or arguments that are offered to evince it. Judas, without doubt, thought Jesus to be the Messiah, from the things which he saw and heard; but yet all along was a devil. So we read of many that believed in Christ's name, when *they saw the miracles that He did*; whom yet Christ knew had not that within them which was to be depended on. So Simon the sorcerer believed, when he beheld the miracles and signs which were done; but yet remained in *the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity*. And, if there is such a belief or assent of the judgment in some natural men, none can doubt but that religious affections may arise from that assent or belief; as we read of some who believed for a while, that were greatly affected, and *anon with joy received the Word*.

It is evident that there is such a thing as a spiritual belief or conviction of the truth of the

things of the Gospel, or a belief that is peculiar to those who are spiritual or who are regenerated, and have the Spirit of God in His holy communications dwelling in them as a vital principle. So that the conviction they have does not only differ from that which natural men have in its concomitants, in that it is accompanied with good works; but the belief itself is diverse. The assent and conviction of the judgment is of a kind peculiar to those who are spiritual, and that which natural men are wholly destitute of. It is from the Spirit of God's enlightening the mind to have right apprehensions, and so, as it were, unveiling things or revealing them, and enabling the mind to view them and see them as they are. *"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight."*

If it be so that that is a spiritual conviction of the divinity and reality of the things exhibited in the Gospel, which arises from a spiritual understanding of them, I have shown already what that is, namely, a sense and taste of the divine, supreme, and holy excellency and beauty of those things. So that then is the mind spiritually convinced of the divinity and truth of the great things of the Gospel, when that conviction arises, either directly or remotely, from such a sense or view of their divine excellency and glory as is there exhibited.

This view or sense has a tendency to convince

the mind two ways—directly, and more indirectly and remotely.

1. A view of their divine glory directly convinces the mind of the divinity of these things, as this glory is in itself a clear and all-conquering evidence of it; especially when clearly discovered, or when this supernatural sense is given in a good degree.

He that has his judgment thus directly convinced and assured of the divinity of the things of the Gospel, by a clear view of their divine glory, has a reasonable conviction. His belief and assurance are altogether agreeable to reason; because the divine glory of divine things is in itself real evidence of their divinity, and the most direct and strong evidence. He that truly sees the divine, transcendent, supreme glory of those things which are divine, does, as it were, know their divinity intuitively. He not only argues that they are divine, but he sees that they are divine. He sees that in them wherein divinity chiefly consists, for in this glory, which is so vastly and inexpressibly distinguished from the glory of artificial things and all other glory, does mainly consist the true notion of divinity. God is God, distinguished from all other beings and exalted above them, chiefly by His divine beauty, which is infinitely diverse from all other beauty. They therefore that see the stamp of this glory in divine things, they see divinity in them, they see God in them, and so see them to be divine; because they see that in them wherein the truest idea of divinity does consist.

Thus a soul may have a kind of intuitive knowledge of the divinity of the things exhibited in the Gospel; not that he judges the doctrines of the Gospel to be from God without any argument or deduction at all; but it is without any long chain of arguments; the argument is but one and the evidence direct. The mind ascends to the truth of the Gospel but by one step, and that is its divine glory.

It would be very strange, if any professing Christian should deny it to be possible that there should be an excellency in divine things, which is so transcendent and exceedingly different from what is in other things that, if it were seen, it would evidently distinguish them. We cannot rationally doubt but that things that are divine—that appertain to the Supreme Being—are vastly different from things that are human; that there is a God-like, high, and glorious excellency in them, that does so distinguish them from the things which are of men that the difference is ineffable; and therefore such as, if seen, will have a most convincing, satisfying influence upon anyone that they are what they are, namely, divine.

There are natural excellencies, that are very evidently distinguishing of the subjects or authors, to anyone who beholds them. How vastly is the speech of an understanding man different from that of a little child! And how greatly distinguished is the speech of some men of great genius, as Homer, Cicero, Milton, Locke, Addison, and others,

from that of many other understanding men: There are no limits to be set to the degrees of manifestation of mental excellency, that there may be in speech. But, above all, do the manifestations of the moral and spiritual glory of the divine Being bring their own evidence, and tend to assure the heart. Thus the disciples were assured that Jesus was the Son of God, "*for they beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*" When Christ appeared in the glory of His transfiguration to His disciples, with that outward glory to their bodily eyes which was a sweet and admirable symbol and semblance of His spiritual glory, together with His spiritual glory itself manifested to their minds; the manifestation of glory was such, as did perfectly and with good reason assure them of His divinity; as appears by what one of them says concerning it. "*He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*"

Now, this distinguishing glory of the divine Being has its brightest appearance and manifestation in the things proposed and exhibited to us in the Gospel—the doctrines there taught, the word there spoken, and the divine counsels and acts and works there revealed. These things have the clearest, most admirable, and distinguishing representations and exhibitions of the glory of God's moral perfec-

tions, that ever were made to the world. And if there be such a distinguishing, evidential manifestation of divine glory in the Gospel, it is reasonable to suppose that there may be such a thing as seeing it: what should hinder but that it may be seen?

It is no argument that it cannot be seen, that some do not see it; though they may be discerning men in temporal matters. If there be such ineffable, distinguishing evidential excellencies in the Gospel, it is reasonable to suppose that they are such as are not to be discerned but by the special influence and enlightenings of the Spirit of God. There is need of uncommon force of mind to discern the distinguishing excellencies of the works of authors of great genius. Those things in Milton, which to mean judges appear tasteless and imperfections, are his inimitable excellencies in the eyes of those who are of greater discerning and better taste. And, if there be a book which God is the Author of, it is most reasonable to suppose that the distinguishing glories of His Word are of such a kind, as that the sin and corruption of men's hearts, which above all things alienate men from the Deity and make the heart dull and stupid to any sense or taste of those things wherein the moral glory of the divine perfections consists; I say it is but reasonable to suppose that this would blind men from discerning the beauties of such a book; and that therefore they will not see them but as God is pleased to enlighten them, and restore a holy taste to discern and relish divine beauties.

Unless men may come to a reasonable solid persuasion and conviction of the truth of the Gospel, by the internal evidences of it and by a sight of its glory, it is impossible that those who are illiterate and unacquainted with history should have any thorough and effectual conviction of it at all. They may without this see a great deal of probability of it. It may be reasonable for them to give much credit to what learned men and historians tell them; and they may tell them so much that it may look very probable and rational that the Christian religion is true. But to have a conviction so clear and evident and assuring as to be sufficient to induce them with boldness to sell all, confidently and fearlessly to run the venture of the loss of all things and of enduring the most exquisite and long-continued torments, and to trample the world under foot and *count all things but dung* for Christ: the evidence they can have from history cannot be sufficient. After all that learned men have said to them, there will remain innumerable doubts on their minds. They will be ready, when pinched with some great trial of their faith, to say, "How do I know this or that? How do I know when these histories were written? Learned men tell me they were so and so attested in the day of them; but how do I know that there were such attestations then? They tell me there is equal reason to believe these facts as any whatsoever that are related at such a distance; but how do I know that other facts

which are related of those ages ever were?" There will remain endless doubts and scruples.

But the Gospel was not given only for learned men. There are at least nineteen in twenty, if not ninety-nine in a hundred, of those for whom the Scriptures were written, that are not capable of any certain or effectual conviction of their divine authority by such arguments. If men who have been brought up in heathenism must wait for a clear and certain conviction of the truth of Christianity, until they have learning and acquaintance with the histories of politer nations, enough to see clearly the force of such kind of arguments it will make the evidence of the Gospel to them immensely cumbersome, and will render the propagation of the Gospel among them infinitely difficult. Miserable is the condition of the Houssatannuck Indians and others, who have lately manifested a desire to be instructed in Christianity, if they can come at no evidence of its truth sufficient to induce them to sell all for Christ, in any other way but this.

It is reasonable to suppose that God would give the greatest evidence of those things which are greatest, and the truth of which is of greatest importance to us; and that we, if we are wise and act rationally, shall have the greatest desire of having full, undoubting, and perfect assurance of. But it is certain that such an assurance is not to be attained by the greater part of them who live under the Gospel, by arguments

fetched from ancient traditions, histories, and monuments.

And, if we come to fact and experience, there is not the least reason to suppose that one in a hundred of those who have been sincere Christians, and have had a heart to sell all for Christ, have come by their conviction of the truth of the Gospel this way. If we read over the histories of the many thousands that died martyrs for Christ, since the beginning of the Reformation, and have cheerfully undergone extreme tortures in a confidence of the truth of the Gospel, and consider their circumstances and advantages—how few of them were there, that ever came by their assured persuasion this way; or, indeed, for whom it was possible to receive so full and strong an assurance from such arguments! Many of them were weak women and children, and the greater part of them illiterate persons, brought up in popish ignorance and darkness, and but newly come out of it, who lived and died in times wherein those arguments for the truth of Christianity from antiquity and history had been but very imperfectly handled. Indeed, it is but very lately that these arguments have been set in a clear and convincing light, even by learned men themselves; and infidelity never prevailed so much in any age as in this, wherein these things are handled to the greatest advantage.

The true martyrs of Jesus Christ are not those who have only been strong in opinion that the Gospel of Christ is true, but those that have seen

the truth of it; as the very name of *martyrs* or *witnesses* implies. Those are very improperly called witnesses of the truth of anything, who only declare they are very much of opinion that such a thing is true. Those only are proper witnesses, who can and do testify that they have seen the truth of the thing they assert. "*We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.*" "*And I saw, and bare record, that this is the Son of God.*" The true martyrs and all the saints, who by their holy practice under great trials declare that faith which is *the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen,* can speak in the style of witnesses; and not only say that they think the Gospel is divine, but say that it is divine, giving it as their testimony because they have seen it to be so. But yet it must be noted that, among those who have a spiritual sight of the divine glory of the Gospel, there is a great variety of degrees of strength of faith, as there is a vast variety of the degrees of clearness of views of this glory; but there is no true and saving faith, or spiritual conviction of the judgment of the truth of the Gospel, that has nothing in it of this manifestation of its internal evidence in some degree. The Gospel of the blessed God does not go abroad a-begging for its evidence, so much as some think; it has its highest and most proper evidence in itself. Though great use may be made of external arguments, and they are not to be neglected but highly prized and valued; for they may be service-

able to awaken unbelievers and bring them to serious consideration, and to confirm the faith of true saints: yea, they may be in some respects subservient to the begetting of a saving faith in men. Yet what was said before remains true that there is no spiritual conviction of the judgment, but what arises from an apprehension of the spiritual beauty and glory of divine things.

2. I proceed now, to observe how a view of this divine glory does convince the mind of the truth of Christianity more indirectly.

First.—It does so, as the prejudices of the heart against the truth of divine things are hereby removed, so that the mind lies open to the force of the reasons which are offered. The mind of man is naturally full of enmity against the doctrines of the Gospel; which is a disadvantage to those arguments that prove their truth, and causes them to lose their force upon the mind. But when a person has discovered to him the divine excellency of Christian doctrines, this destroys that enmity, and removes the prejudices, and sanctifies the reason, and causes it to be open and free.

Secondly.—It not only removes the hindrances of reason, but positively helps reason. It makes even the speculative notions more lively. The ideas themselves, which otherwise are dim and obscure, by this means have a light cast upon them, and are impressed with greater strength, so that the mind can better judge of them; as he that beholds the objects on the face of the earth,

when the light of the sun is cast upon them, is under greater advantage to discern them in their true forms and mutual relations, and to see the evidences of divine wisdom and skill in their contrivance, than he that sees them in a dim starlight or twilight.

What has been said may serve in some measure to show the nature of a spiritual conviction of the judgment of the truth and reality of divine things, and so to distinguish truly gracious affections from others; for gracious affections are evermore attended with such a conviction of the judgment.

But, before I dismiss this head, it will be needful to observe the ways whereby some are deceived.

1. There is a degree of conviction of the truth of the great things of religion, that arises from the common enlightenings of the Spirit of God. That more lively and sensible apprehension, such as natural men have who are under awakenings and common illuminations, will give some degree of conviction of the truth of divine things, beyond what they had before they were thus enlightened. Hereby they see the natural perfections of God; such as His greatness, power, and awful majesty. And the lively apprehension of the greatness of God, which natural men may have, tends to make them sensible of the guilt which sin against such a God brings and the dreadfulness of His wrath. And this tends to cause them more easily and fully to believe the revelation the Scripture makes of another world, and of the extreme misery it threatens there to be inflicted on sinners. And

so men may be the more induced to believe the truth of religion. These things persons may have, and yet have no sense of the beauty and amiableness of the moral and holy excellency that is in the things of religion; and therefore no spiritual conviction of their truth. But yet such convictions are sometimes mistaken for saving convictions, and the affections flowing from them for saving affections.

2. The extraordinary impressions which are made on the imaginations of some persons, in the visions and immediate strong impulses and suggestions that they have, as though they saw sights and had words spoken to them, may and often do beget a strong persuasion of the truth of invisible things. Though the general tendency of such things in their final issue is to draw men off from the Word of God, and to establish unbelief and atheism, yet for the present they may beget a persuasion of the truth of some things that are revealed in the Scriptures; however this confidence is founded in delusion, and so nothing worth. As, for instance, if a person has by some invisible agent immediately and strongly impressed on his imagination the appearance of a bright light, and glorious form of a Person seated on a throne with great external majesty and beauty, uttering some remarkable words with great force and energy; the person who is the subject of such an operation may be confident that there is a Christ, and that Christ reigns on a throne in heaven as he saw Him, and that the words which he heard Him speak are

true. In the same manner, as the lying miracles of the Papists may beget in the minds of the ignorant deluded people a strong persuasion of the truth of many things declared in the New Testament; for they may look upon these miracles as certain evidences of all these things, and a kind of ocular demonstration of them. Even the intercourse which Satan has with witches, and their often experiencing his immediate power, has a tendency to convince them of the truth of some of the doctrines of religion; as particularly the reality of an invisible world, or world of spirits, contrary to the doctrine of the Sadducees. The general tendency of Satan's influence is delusion; but yet he may mix some truth with his lies, that his lies may not be so easily discovered.

There are multitudes that are deluded with a counterfeit faith from impressions on their imagination, in the manner which has been now spoken of. They say they know that there is a God, for they have seen Him. They know that Christ is the Son of God, for they have seen Him in His glory. They know that Christ died for sinners, for they have seen Him hanging on the Cross and His blood running from His wounds. They know there is a heaven and a hell, for they have seen the misery of the damned souls in hell, and the glory of saints and angels in heaven (meaning some external representations, strongly impressed on their imagination). They know that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and that such and such

promises in particular are His Word, for they have heard Him speak them to them; they came to their minds suddenly and immediately from God without their having any hand in it.

3. Persons may seem to have their belief of the truth of the things of religion greatly increased, when the foundation of it is only a persuasion they have received of their interest in them. When they hear of these great and glorious things, it is with this notion that they all belong to them; and hence they easily become confident that they are true; they look upon it to be greatly for their interest that they should be true. It is very obvious what a strong influence men's interest and inclinations have on their judgments. While a natural man thinks that, if there be a heaven and a hell, the latter and not the former belongs to him; then he will be hardly persuaded that there is a heaven or a hell. But when he comes to be persuaded that hell belongs only to other folks and not to him, then he can easily allow the reality of it, and cry out of others' senselessness and sottishness in neglecting means of escape from it; and, being confident that he is a child of God, and that God has promised heaven to him, he may seem strong in the faith of its reality, and may have a great zeal against that infidelity which denies it.

VI.

Gracious affections are attended *with evangelical humiliation.*

Evangelical humiliation is a sense that a Christian has of his own utter insufficiency, despicableness, and odiousness, with an answerable frame of heart.

There is a distinction to be made between a legal and evangelical humiliation. The former is what men may be the subjects of, while they are yet in a state of nature and have no gracious affection; the latter is peculiar to true saints. The former is from the common influence of the Spirit of God, assisting natural principles and especially natural conscience; the latter is from the special influences of the Spirit of God, implanting and exercising supernatural and divine principles. The former is from the mind's being assisted to a greater sense of the things of religion as to their natural properties and qualities, and particularly of the natural perfections of God, such as His greatness and terrible majesty, which were manifested to the congregation of Israel in giving the law at Mount Sinai; the latter is from a sense of the transcendent beauty of divine things in their moral qualities. In the former, a sense of the awful greatness and natural perfections of God, and of the strictness of His law, convinces men that they are exceeding sinful and guilty and exposed to the wrath of God, as it will wicked men and devils at the Day of Judgment; but they do not see their own odiousness on the account of sin, nor do they see the hateful nature of sin; a sense of this is given in evangelical humiliation by a

discovery of the beauty of God's holiness and moral perfection.

In a legal humiliation, men are made sensible that they are little and nothing before the great and terrible God, and that they are undone and wholly insufficient to help themselves; but they have not an answerable frame of heart, consisting in a disposition to abase themselves and exalt God alone; this disposition is given only in evangelical humiliation, by overcoming the heart and changing its inclination, by a discovery of God's holy beauty. In a legal humiliation, the conscience is convinced, as the consciences of all will be most perfectly at the Day of Judgment; but, because there is no spiritual understanding, the will is not bowed nor the inclination altered; this is done only in evangelical humiliation. In legal humiliation, men are brought to despair of helping themselves; in evangelical, they are brought voluntarily to deny and renounce themselves. In the former, they are subdued and forced to the ground; in the latter, they are brought sweetly to yield, and freely and with delight to prostrate themselves at the feet of God.

Legal humiliation has in it no spiritual good, nothing of the nature of true virtue; whereas evangelical humiliation is that wherein the excellent beauty of Christian grace does very much consist. It is man's mean esteem of himself, as in himself nothing, and altogether contemptible and odious; attended with a mortification of a dis-

position to exalt himself, and a free renunciation of his own glory.

This is a great and most essential thing in true religion. The whole frame of the Gospel, and everything appertaining to the new covenant, and all God's dispensations towards fallen man, are calculated to bring to pass this effect in the hearts of men. *"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."* The centurion acknowledged that he was not worthy that Christ should enter under his roof. The woman which was a sinner did not think the hair of her head, which is the natural crown and glory of a woman, too good to wipe the feet of Christ withal. The woman of Canaan did, as it were, own that she was worthy to be called a dog, whereupon Christ says unto her, *"O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."* The prodigal son said, *"I will arise and go to my father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants."* The publican standing afar off would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner. "And they came, and held him by the feet, and worshipped him." "Put ye on as the elect of God,—humbleness of mind."*

As we would therefore make the Holy Scriptures our rule in judging of the nature of true religion and of our own religious qualifications and state, it concerns us greatly to look at this humiliation

as one of the most essential things pertaining to true Christianity.[1] This is the principal part of the great Christian duty of self-denial. That duty consists in two things, *first*, in a man's denying his worldly inclinations, and in forsaking and renouncing all worldly objects and enjoyments; and *secondly*, in denying his natural self-exaltation, and renouncing his own dignity and glory, and in being emptied of himself; so that he does freely and from his very heart, as it were, renounce himself and annihilate himself. This the Christian does in evangelical humiliation. And this latter is the greatest and most difficult part of self-denial; although they always go together, and one never truly is where the other is not; yet natural men can come much nearer to the former than the latter. Many anchorites and recluses have abandoned (though without any true mortification) the wealth and pleasures and common enjoyments of the world, who were far from renouncing their own dignity and righteousness. They never denied themselves for Christ, but only sold one lust to

[1] Calvin, in his *Institutes*, says: "I was always exceedingly pleased with that saying of Chrysostom, 'The foundation of our philosophy is humility'; and yet more pleased with that of Augustine. 'As,' says he, 'the rhetorician, being asked what was the first thing in the rules of eloquence, answered pronunciation; what was the second, pronunciation; what was the third, still answered, pronunciation. So if you shall ask me concerning the precepts of the Christian religion, I would answer, firstly, secondly, and thirdly, and for ever, humility.'"

feed another—sold a beastly lust to pamper a devilish one; and so were never the better, but their latter end was worse than their beginning. They turned out one black devil to let in seven white ones that were worse than the first, though of a fairer countenance. It is inexpressible, and almost inconceivable, how strong a self-righteous, self-exalting disposition is naturally in man; and what he will not do and suffer to feed and gratify it; and what lengths have been gone in a seeming self-denial in other respects, by Essenes and Pharisees among the Jews; and by Papists, many sects of heretics, and enthusiasts among professing Christians; and by many Mahometans; and by Pythagorean philosophers, and others among the heathen; and all to do sacrifice to this Moloch of spiritual pride or self-righteousness; and that they may have something wherein to exalt themselves before God and above their fellow-creatures.

That humiliation is what all the most glorious hypocrites, who make the most splendid show of mortification to the world, do grossly fail in. Were it not that this is so much insisted on in Scripture as a most essential thing in true grace, one would be tempted to think that many of the heathen philosophers were truly gracious, in whom was so bright an appearance of many virtues, and also great illuminations and inward fervours and elevations of mind, as though they were truly the subjects of divine illapses and heavenly communications. It is true that many hypocrites make

great pretences to humility as well as other graces; and very often there is nothing whatsoever which they make a higher profession of. But they commonly make bungling work of it, though glorious work in their own eyes. They cannot find out what a humble speech and behaviour is, or how to speak and act so that there may indeed be a savour of Christian humility in what they say and do. That sweet humble air and mien is beyond their art, being not led by the Spirit, or naturally guided to a behaviour becoming holy humility by the vigour of a lowly spirit within them. And therefore they have no other way, many of them, but only to be much in declaring that they be humble, and telling how they were humbled to the dust at such and such times, and abounding in very bad expressions which they use about themselves; such as, "I am the least of all saints, I am a poor vile creature, I am not worthy of the least mercy or that God should look upon me! Oh, I have a dreadful wicked heart! my heart is worse than the devil; oh, this cursed heart of mine!" Such expressions are very often used, not with a heart that is broken, not with spiritual mourning, not with the tears of her that washed Jesus' feet with her tears, not as "*remembering and being confounded, and never opening their mouth more because of their shame*"; but with a light air, with smiles in the countenance, or with a Pharisaical affectation. And we must believe that they are thus humble, and see themselves so vile, upon the

credit of their saying so; for there is nothing appears in them of any savour of humility in the manner of their deportment and deeds that they do.

There are many that are full of expressions of their own vileness, who yet expect to be looked upon as eminent and bright saints by others as their due; and it is dangerous for any so much as to hint the contrary, or to carry it towards them any otherwise than as if we looked upon them as some of the chief of Christians. There are many that are much in crying out of their wicked hearts and their great shortcomings and unprofitableness, and speaking as though they looked on themselves as the meanest of the saints; who yet, if a minister should seriously tell them the same things in private, and should signify that he feared they were very low and weak Christians, and thought they had reason solemnly to consider of their great barrenness and unprofitableness and falling so much short of many others, it would be more than they could digest. They would think themselves highly injured, and there would be a danger of a rooted prejudice in them against such a minister.

There are some that are abundant in talking against legal doctrines, legal preaching, and a legal spirit, who do but little understand the thing they talk against. A legal spirit is a more subtle thing than they imagine—it is too subtle for them. It lurks and operates and prevails in their hearts, and they are most notoriously guilty of it, at the same time when they are inveighing against it So far

as a man is not emptied of himself and of his own righteousness and goodness, in whatever form or shape, so far he is of a legal spirit. He that is proud of his experiences arrogates something to himself, as though his experiences were some dignity of his. And if he looks on them as his own dignity, he necessarily thinks that God looks on them so too; for he thinks his own opinion of them to be true, and consequently judges that God looks on them as he does. And thus he trusts in what is inherent in him, to make him shine in God's sight and recommend him to God; and with this encouragement he goes before God in prayer: and this makes him expect much from God; and this makes him think that Christ loves him, and that He is willing to clothe him with His righteousness; because he supposes that He is taken with his experiences and graces. And this is a high degree of living on his own righteousness; and such persons are in the high road to hell. Poor deluded wretches, who think they look so glistering in God's eyes, when they are a smoke in His nose, and are many of them more odious to Him than the most impure beast in Sodom, that makes no pretence to religion!

There is a pretended great humiliation, and being dead to the law and emptied of self, which is one of the biggest and most elated things in the world. Some there are who have made great profession of experience of a thorough work of the law on their own hearts, and of being brought

fully off from works, whose conversation has savoured most of a self-righteous spirit of any that ever I had opportunity to observe. And some who think themselves quite emptied of themselves, and are confident that they are abased in the dust, are full as they can hold with the glory of their own humility, and lifted up to heaven with an high opinion of their abasement. Their humility is a swelling, self-conceited, confident, showy, noisy, assuming humility. It seems to be the nature of spiritual pride to make men conceited and ostentatious of their humility. This appears in that first-born of pride among the children of men, that would be called his Holiness. He styles himself Servant of servants, and to make a show of humility washes the feet of a number of poor men at his inauguration.

For persons to be truly emptied of themselves, and to be poor in spirit and broken in heart, is quite another thing, and has other effects than many imagine. The deceitfulness of the heart of man appears in no one thing so much as this of spiritual pride and self-righteousness. The subtlety of Satan appears in its height, in his managing of persons with respect to this sin. And perhaps one reason may be that here he has most experience. He knows the way of its coming in; he is acquainted with the secret springs of it: it was his own sin. Experience gives vast advantage in leading souls, either in good or evil.

But though spiritual pride be so subtle and

secret an iniquity, and commonly appears under a pretext of great humility; yet there are two things by which it may (perhaps universally and surely) be discovered and distinguished.

The *first* thing is this: he that is under the prevalence of this distemper is apt to think highly of his attainments in religion, as comparing himself with others. It is natural for him to fall into that thought of himself that he is an eminent saint, that he is very high among the saints and has distinguishingly good and great experiences. This is the secret language of his heart, "*God, I thank thee that I am not as other men,*" and "*I am holier than thou.*" Hence such are apt to put themselves forward among God's people, and, as it were, to take a high seat among them, as if there was no doubt of it but it belonged to them.

But he whose heart is under the power of Christian humility is of a contrary disposition. If the Scriptures are at all to be relied on, such an one is apt to think his attainments in religion to be comparatively mean, and to esteem himself low among the saints, and one of the least. Humility, or true lowliness of mind, disposes persons to think *others better than themselves.* Hence they are apt to think the lowest room belongs to them. It is not natural to them to take upon them to do the part of teachers; but, on the contrary, they are disposed to think that they are not the persons, that others are fitter for it than they; as it was with Moses and Jeremiah, though they were such eminent

saints and of great knowledge. It is not natural to them to think that it belongs to them to teach, but to be taught; they are much more eager to hear and to receive instructions from others, than to dictate to others. And when they do speak, it is not natural to them to speak with a bold, masterly air; but humility disposes them rather to speak trembling.

There are some persons that naturally think highly of their experiences; and they do often themselves speak of their experiences as very great and extraordinary; they freely speak of the great things they have met with. This may be spoken and meant in a good sense. In one sense, every degree of saving mercy is a great thing. It is indeed a great thing, yea, infinitely great, for God to bestow the least crumb of children's bread on such dogs as we are in ourselves. And the more humble a person is that hopes that God has bestowed such mercy on him, the more apt will he be to call it a great thing that he has met with in this sense. But, if by great things which they have experienced they mean comparatively great spiritual experiences, or great compared with others' experiences, or beyond what is ordinary, which is evidently oftentimes the case: then for a person to say, *I have met with great things,* is the very same thing as to say, *I am an eminent saint and have more grace than ordinary.*

The persons that talk thus about their experiences, when they give an account of them, expect that

others should admire them. Indeed they do not call it boasting to talk after this manner about their experiences, nor do they look upon it as any sign of pride; because they say, "they know that it was not they that did it, it was free grace, they are the great things that God has done for them, they would acknowledge the mercy God has shown them and not make light of it." But Christians that are really the most eminent saints, and therefore have the most excellent experiences, and are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, humble themselves *as a little child*, because they look on themselves as but little children in grace, and their attainments to be but the attainments of babes in Christ, and are astonished at and ashamed of the low degrees of their love and their thankfulness, and their little knowledge of God. Moses, when he had been conversing with God in the Mount, and his face shone so bright in the eyes of others as to dazzle their eyes, *wist not his face shone.*

Such is the nature of grace and of true spiritual light that they naturally dispose the saints in the present state to look upon their grace and goodness little, and their deformity great. And they that have the most grace and spiritual light of any in this world have most of this disposition; as will appear most clear and evident to anyone that soberly and thoroughly weighs the nature and reason of things, and considers the things following.

That grace and holiness is worthy to be called little, that is little in comparison of what it ought

to be. To a gracious soul, and especially to one eminently gracious, that holiness appears little, which is little of what he sees infinite reason for and obligation to. If his holiness appears to him to be at a vast distance from this, it naturally appears despicable in his eyes, and not worthy to be mentioned as any beauty or amiableness in him. For the like reason as a hungry man naturally accounts that which is set before him but a little food, a small matter, not worth mentioning, that is nothing in comparison of his appetite. Or as the child of a great prince, that is jealous for the honour of his father, and beholds the respect which men show him, naturally looks on that honour and respect very little and not worthy to be regarded, which is nothing in comparison of that which the dignity of his father requires.

But that is the nature of true grace and spiritual light, that it opens to a person's view the infinite reason there is that he should be holy in a high degree. And the more grace he has, the more this is opened to view, the greater sense he has of the infinite excellency and glory of the divine Being, and of the infinite dignity of the person of Christ, and the boundless length and breadth and depth and height of the love of Christ to sinners. And as grace increases, the field opens more and more a distant view, until the soul is swallowed up with the vastness of the object, and the person is astonished to think how much it becomes him to love this God and this glorious Redeemer that has

so loved man, and how little he does love. And so, the more he apprehends, the more the smallness of his grace and love appears strange and wonderful; and therefore he is more ready to think that others are beyond him. For, wondering at the littleness of his own grace, he can scarcely believe that so strange a thing happens to other saints. It is amazing to him that one that is really a child of God, and that has actually received the saving benefits of that unspeakable love of Christ, should love no more; and he is apt to look upon it as a thing peculiar to himself—a strange and exempt instance. For he sees only the outside of other Christians, but he sees his own inside.

Grace in the most eminent saints in this world is truly very little in comparison of what it ought to be. Because the highest love that ever any attain to in this life, is poor, cold, exceeding low, and not worthy to be named in comparison of what our obligations appear to be, from the joint consideration of these two things: 1. The reason God has given us to love Him, in the manifestations He has made of His infinite glory, in His Word, and in His works; and particularly in the Gospel of His Son, and what He has done for sinful man by Him. And, 2. The capacity there is in the soul of man, by those intellectual faculties which God has given it, of seeing and understanding these reasons which God has given us to love Him. How small indeed is the love of the most eminent

saint on earth, in comparison of what these things jointly considered do require!

And the eminent saint having such a conviction of the high degree in which he ought to love God, this shows him, not only the littleness of his grace, but the greatness of his remaining corruption. In order to judge how much corruption or sin we have remaining in us, we must take our measure from that height to which the rule of our duty extends. The whole of the distance we are at from that height is sin; for failing of duty is sin; and by how much the more we fall short of our duty so much the more sin have we. Sin is no other than disagreeableness, in a moral agent, to the law or rule of his duty. Therefore if men in their love to God do not come up half-way to that height which duty requires, then they have more corruption in their hearts than grace. All that is wanting is sin; it is an abominable defect, and appears so to the saints, especially those that are eminent. It appears exceeding abominable to them that Christ should be loved so little, and thanked so little for His dying love. It is in their eyes hateful ingratitude.

And then the increase of grace has a tendency another way, to cause the saints to think their deformity vastly more than their goodness. It not only tends to convince them their corruption is much greater than their goodness, which is indeed the case; but it also tends to cause the deformity that there is in the least sin, or the least degree of

corruption, to appear so great as vastly to outweigh all the beauty there is in their greatest holiness. For the least sin against an infinite God has an infinite hatefulness or deformity in it; but the highest degree of holiness in a creature has not an infinite loveliness in it; and therefore the loveliness of it is as nothing in comparison of the deformity of the least sin.

Certainly our obligation to love and honour any being is in some proportion to his loveliness and honourableness, or to his worthiness to be loved and honoured by us. We are surely under greater obligation to love a more lovely being than a less lovely; and if a Being be infinitely lovely or worthy to be loved by us, then our obligations to love Him are infinitely great; and whatever is contrary to this love has in it infinite iniquity, deformity, and unworthiness. But, on the other hand, with respect to our holiness or love to God, there is not an infinite worthiness in that. So much the greater the distance between God and the creature, so much the less is the creature's respect worthy of God's notice or regard. The great degree of superiority increases the obligation on the inferior to regard the superior, and so makes the want of regard more hateful; but the great degree of inferiority diminishes the worth of the regard of the inferior, because the more he is inferior the less he is worthy of notice, and the less he is the less is what he can offer worth. For he can offer no more than himself, in offering his best respect;

and therefore as he is little and little worth, so is his respect little worth. And the more a person has of true grace and spiritual light, the more will it appear thus to him; the more will he appear to himself infinitely deformed by reason of sin, and the less will the goodness that is in his grace, or good experience, appear in proportion to it. For indeed it is nothing to it; it is less than a drop to the ocean; for finite bears no proportion at all to that which is infinite.

The more eminent saints are, and the more they have of the light of heaven in their souls, the more do they appear to themselves as the most eminent saints in this world do to the saints and angels in heaven. How can we rationally suppose the most eminent saints on earth appear to them, if beheld any otherwise than covered over with the righteousness of Christ, and their deformities swallowed up and hid in the coruscation of the beams of His abundant glory and love? How can we suppose our most ardent love and praises appear to them, that do behold the beauty and glory of God without a veil? How does our highest thankfulness for the dying love of Christ appear to them who see Christ as He is, who know as they are known, and see the glory of the Person of Him that died, and the wonders of His dying love without any cloud of darkness? And how do they look on the deepest reverence and humility, with which worms of the dust on earth approach that infinite Majesty which they behold? The reason why the

highest attainments of the saints on earth appear so mean to them, is because they dwell in the light of God's glory and see God as He is. And it is in this respect with the saints on earth as it is with the saints in heaven, in proportion as they are more eminent in grace.

I would not be understood that the saints on earth have in all respects the worst opinion of themselves, when they have most of the exercise of grace. In many respects it is otherwise. With respect to the positive exercises of corruption, they may appear to themselves freest and best when grace is most in exercise, and worst when the actings of grace are lowest. And when they compare themselves with themselves at different times, they may know, when grace is in lively exercise, that it is better with them than it was before (though before, in the time of it, they did not see so much badness as they see now). And when afterwards they sink again in the frame of their minds, they may know that they sink, and have a new argument of their great remaining corruption, and a rational conviction of a greater vileness than they saw before; and may have more of a sense of guilt, and a kind of legal sense of their sinfulness, by far, than when in the lively exercise of grace. But yet it is true that the children of God never have so much of a sensible and spiritual conviction of their deformity, and so great and quick and abasing a sense of their present vileness and odiousness, as when they are highest

in the exercise of true and pure grace; and never are they so much disposed to set themselves low among Christians as then.

I will not deny that it is possible that he who has much grace, and is an eminent saint, may know it. But he will not be apt to know it; it will not be a thing obvious to him. That he is better than others, and has higher experiences and attainments, is not a foremost thought; nor is it that which from time to time readily offers itself. It is a thing that is not in his way, but lies far out of sight; he must take pains to convince himself of it; there will be need of a great command of reason, and a high degree of strictness and care in arguing, to convince himself. And, if he be rationally convinced by a very strict consideration of his own experiences, compared with the great appearances of low degrees of grace in some other saints, it will hardly seem real to him that he has more grace than they; and he will be apt to lose the conviction that he has by pains obtained; nor will it seem at all natural to him to act upon that supposition. And this may be laid down as an infallible thing: That the person who is apt to think that he, as compared with others, is a very eminent saint, much distinguished in Christian experience, in whom this is a first thought that rises of itself and naturally offers itself—he is certainly mistaken; he is no eminent saint, but under the great prevailings of a proud and self-righteous spirit. And if this be habitual with the man, and is

statedly the prevailing temper of his mind, he is no saint at all.

To this some may object that the Psalmist, when we must suppose that he was in a holy frame, speaks of his knowledge as far greater than that of other saints. *"I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients; because I keep thy precepts."*

To this I answer two things:—

1. There is no restraint to be laid upon the Spirit of God, as to what He shall reveal to a prophet for the benefit of His Church, who is speaking or writing under immediate inspiration. The Spirit of God may reveal to such an one, and dictate to him to declare to others, secret things that otherwise would be hard, yea, impossible for him to find out. As He may reveal to him mysteries, that otherwise would be above the reach of his reason; or things in a distant place, that he cannot see; or future events, that it would be impossible for him to know and declare, if they were not extraordinarily revealed. So the Spirit of God might reveal to David this distinguishing benefit he had received by conversing much with God's testimonies; and might use him as His instrument to record it for the benefit of others, to excite them to the like duty and to use the same means to gain knowledge.

2. It is not certain that the knowledge David here speaks of is spiritual knowledge, wherein

holiness does fundamentally consist. But it may be that greater revelation which God made to him of the Messiah and the things of His future kingdom, and the far more clear and extensive knowledge that he had of the mysteries and doctrines of the Gospel, than others, as a reward for his keeping God's testimonies. In this, it is apparent by the Book of Psalms that David far exceeded all that had gone before him.

Secondly, another thing that is an infallible sign of spiritual pride is persons being apt to think highly of their humility. False experiences are commonly attended with a counterfeit humility. And it is the very nature of a counterfeit humility to be highly conceited of itself. But eminently gracious affections (I scruple not to say it) are evermore of a contrary tendency, and have universally a contrary effect in those that have them. They indeed make them very sensible what reason there is that they should be deeply humbled, and cause them earnestly to thirst and long after it; but they make their present humility, or that which they have already attained, to appear small; and their remaining pride great and exceedingly abominable.

The reason why a proud person should be apt to think his humility great, and why a very humble person should think his humility small, may be easily seen if it be considered that it is natural for persons, in judging of the degree of their own humiliation, to take their measure from that which

they esteem their proper height or the dignity wherein they properly stand. That may be great humiliation in one, that is no humiliation at all in another; because the degree of honourableness or considerableness, wherein each does properly stand, is very different. For some great man to stoop to loose the latchet of the shoes of another great man, his equal, or to wash his feet, would be taken notice of as an act of abasement in him; and he, being sensible of his own dignity, would look upon it so himself. But if a poor slave is seen stooping to unloose the shoes of a great prince, nobody will take any notice of this as any act of humiliation in him, or token of any great degree of humility; nor would the slave himself, unless he be horribly proud and ridiculously conceited of himself.

This would make it plain to a demonstration, that the slave was swollen with a high degree of pride and vanity of mind, as much as if he declared in plain terms, "I think myself to be some great one." And the matter is no less plain and certain when worthless, vile, and loathsome worms of the dust are apt to put such a construction on their acts of abasement before God; and to think it a token of great humility in them, that they, under their affections, can find themselves so willing to acknowledge themselves to be mean and unworthy, and to behave themselves as those that are so inferior. The very reason why such outward acts and such inward exercises look like great abase-

ment in such an one, is because he has a high conceit of himself. Whereas, if he thought of himself more justly, these things would appear nothing to him, and his humility in them worthy of no regard; but he would rather be astonished at his pride, that one so infinitely despicable and vile is brought no lower before God. When he says in his heart, "This is a great act of humiliation; it is certainly a sign of great humility in me that I should feel thus and do so," his meaning is, "This is great humility for me—for such a one as I that am so considerable and worthy." He considers how low he is now brought, and compares this with the height of dignity on which he in his heart thinks he properly stands, and the distance appears very great, and he calls it all mere humility, and as such admires it. Whereas, in him that is truly humble and really sees his own vileness and loathsomeness before God, the distance appears the other way. When he is brought lowest of all, it does not appear to him that he is brought below his proper station, but that he is not come to it; he appears to himself yet vastly above it, he longs to get lower, that he may come to it, but appears at a great distance from it. And this distance he calls pride.

All men in the world, in judging of the degree of their own and others' humility, consider two things—the real degree of dignity they stand in, and the degree of abasement with the relation it bears to that dignity. Thus the complying with

the same low place or low act may be an evidence of great humility in one, that evidences but little or no humility in another. But truly humble Christians have so mean an opinion of their own real dignity, that all their self-abasement, when considered with relation to that and compared to that, appears very small to them. It does not seem to them to be any great humility, or any abasement to be made much of, for such poor, vile, abject creatures as they to lie at the foot of God.

Everyone that has been conversant with souls under convictions of sin, knows that those who are greatly convinced of sin are not apt to think themselves greatly convinced. And the reason is this: men judge of the degree of their own convictions of sin by two things—the degree of sense which they have of guilt and pollution, and the degree of cause they have for such a sense in the degree of their real sinfulness. And as it is with conviction of sin, just so it is, by parity of reason, with respect to persons' conviction or sensibleness of their own meanness and vileness, their own blindness, their own impotence, and all that low sense that a Christian has of himself, in the exercise of evangelical humiliation. So that, in a high degree of this, the saints are never disposed to think their sensibleness of their own meanness, filthiness, impotence to be great; because it never appears great to them, considering the cause.

An eminent saint is not apt to think himself

eminent in anything; all his graces and experiences are ready to appear to him to be comparatively small, but especially his humility. There is nothing that appertains to Christian experience and true piety, that is so much out of his sight as his humility. He is a thousand times more quick-sighted to discern his pride than his humility. That he easily discerns, and is apt to take much notice of, but hardly discerns his humility. On the contrary, the deluded hypocrite that is under the power of spiritual pride is so blind to nothing as his pride, and so quick-sighted to nothing as the shows of humility that are in him.

The humble Christian is more apt to find fault with his own pride than with other men's. He is apt to put the best construction on others' words and behaviour, and to think that none are so proud as himself. But the proud hypocrite is quick to discern *the mote in his brother's eye* in this respect, while he sees nothing of *the beam in his own.* He is very often much in crying out of others' pride, finding fault with others' apparel and way of living; and is affected ten times as much with his neighbour's ring or riband as with all the filthiness of his own heart.

Thus I have particularly and largely shown the nature of that true humility that attends holy affections, in its tendency to cause persons to think meanly of their attainments in religion as compared with the attainments of others, and particularly of their attainments in humility; and

have shown the contrary tendency of spiritual pride, to dispose persons to think their attainments in these respects to be great. I have insisted the longer on this matter, because I look upon it as a matter of great importance, as it affords a certain distinction between true and counterfeit humility; and also as this disposition of hypocrites to look on themselves better than others is what God has declared to be very hateful to Him, "*a smoke in his nose, and a fire that burneth all the day.*"

Let not the reader lightly pass over these things in application to himself. If you once have taken it in that it is a bad sign for a person to be apt to think himself a better saint than others, there will arise a blinding prejudice in your own favour; and there will probably be need of a great strictness of self-examination in order to determine whether it be so with you. If on the proposal of the question you answer, "No, it seems to me none are so bad as I," do not let the matter pass off so; but examine again whether or no you do not think yourself better than others on this very account, because you imagine you think so meanly of yourself. Have not you a high opinion of this humility? And if you answer again, "No, I have not a high opinion of my humility; it seems to me I am as proud as the devil"; yet examine again whether self-conceit do not rise up under this cover — whether, on this very account that you think yourself as

proud as the devil, you do not think yourself to be very humble.

From this opposition that there is between the nature of a true and of a counterfeit humility, as to the esteem that the subjects of them have of themselves, arises a manifold contrariety of temper and behaviour.

A truly humble person, having such a mean opinion of his righteousness and holiness, is poor in spirit. He naturally behaves himself in many respects as a poor man. *"The poor useth entreaties, but the rich answereth roughly."* A poor man is not disposed to quick and high resentment when he is among the rich: he is apt to yield to others, for he knows others are above him; he is not stiff and self-willed; he is patient with hard fare; he expects no other than to be despised, and takes it patiently; he does not take it heinously that he is overlooked and but little regarded; he is prepared to be in low place; he readily honours his superiors; he takes reproofs quietly; he easily yields to be taught, and does not claim much to his understanding and judgment; he is not over nice or humoursome, and has his spirit subdued to hard things; he is not assuming nor apt to take much upon him; but it is natural for him to be subject to others. Thus it is with the humble Christian. Humility is (as the great Maestricht expresses it) a kind of holy pusillanimity.

A man that is very poor is a beggar; so is he that is poor in spirit. This is a great difference

between those affections that are gracious, and those that are false. Under the former, the person continues still a poor beggar at God's gates, exceeding empty and needy; but the latter make men appear to themselves *rich and increased with goods,* and not very necessitous; they have a great stock in their own imagination for their subsistence.

A poor man is modest in his speech and behaviour; so, and much more, and more certainly and universally, is one that is poor in spirit; he is humble and modest in his behaviour amongst men. It is in vain for any to pretend that they are humble and as little children before God, when they are haughty, assuming, and impudent in their behaviour amongst men. The apostle informs us that the design of the Gospel is to cut off all glorying, not only before God but also *before men.* In this respect a Christian is like a little child; a little child is modest before men, and his heart is apt to be possessed with fear and awe amongst them.

The same spirit will dispose a Christian to *honour all men.* A humble Christian is not only disposed to honour the saints in his behaviour; but others also, in all those ways that do not imply a visible approbation of their sins. Thus Abraham, the great pattern of believers, honoured the children of Heth—them that were out of Christ, and that Abraham knew to be accursed; and therefore would by no means suffer his servant to take a

wife to his son from among them. So Paul honoured Festus. Not only will Christian humility dispose persons to honour those wicked men that are out of the visible Church, but also false brethren and persecutors. As Jacob, when he was in an excellent frame, having just been wrestling all night with God, and having received the blessing, honoured Esau, his false and persecuting brother. He called him *lord*; and commanded all his family to honour him in like manner.

Thus I have endeavoured to describe the heart and behaviour of one that is governed by a truly gracious humility, as exactly agreeable to the Scripture as I am able.

Now, it is out of such a heart as this that all truly holy affections do flow. Christian affections are like Mary's precious ointment that she poured on Christ's head, that filled the whole house with a sweet odour. That was poured out of an alabaster box; so gracious affections flow out to Christ out of a pure heart. That was poured out of a broken box; until the box was broken, the ointment could not flow nor diffuse its odour; so gracious affections flow out of a broken heart. A truly Christian love, either to God or men, is a humble broken-hearted love. The desires of the saints, however earnest, are humble desires. Their hope is a humble hope. And their joy, even when it is unspeakable and full of glory, is a humbled broken-hearted joy, and leaves the Christian more poor in spirit, and more like a

little child, and more disposed to a universal lowliness of behaviour.

VII.

Another thing wherein gracious affections are distinguished from others, is that *they are attended with a change of nature.*

All gracious affections do arise from a spiritual understanding, in which the soul has the excellency and glory of divine things discovered to it, as was shown before. But all spiritual discoveries are transforming; and not only make an alteration of the present exercise, sensation, and frame of the soul; but such power and efficacy have they that they make an alteration in the very nature of the soul. Such power as this is properly divine power, and is peculiar to the Spirit of the Lord. Other powers may make a great alteration in men's present frames and feelings; but it is the power of a Creator only that can change the nature, or give a new nature. And no discoveries or illuminations, but those that are divine and supernatural, will have this supernatural effect. But this effect all those discoveries have, that are truly divine. The soul is deeply affected by these discoveries, and so affected as to be transformed.

Thus it is with those affections that the soul is the subject of in its conversion. The Scripture representations of conversion do strongly imply and signify a change of nature: such as being

born again; becoming *new creatures; rising from the dead;* being *renewed in the spirit of the mind; dying to sin, and living to righteousness; putting off the old man, and putting on the new man;* a being *ingrafted into a new stock;* a having *a divine seed implanted in the heart;* a being *made partakers of the divine nature.*

Therefore, if there be no great and remarkable abiding change in persons, who think they have experienced a work of conversion, vain are all their imaginations and pretences, however they have been affected. Conversion (if we may give any credit to the Scripture) is a great and universal change of the man, turning him from sin to God. A man may be restrained from sin, before he is converted; but when he is converted, he is not only restrained from sin, his very heart and nature are turned from it unto holiness; so that thenceforward he becomes a holy person and an enemy to sin. If therefore, after a person's high affections, at his supposed first conversion, it comes to this in a little time, that there is no very sensible or remarkable alteration in him, as to those bad qualities and evil habits which before were visible in him, and he is ordinarily under the prevalence of the same kind of dispositions that he used to be, and the same things seem to belong to his character — he appears as selfish, carnal, as stupid and perverse, as unchristian and unsavoury as ever—it is greater evidence against him than the brightest story of experiences that

ever was told is for him. For *in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision,* neither high profession nor low profession, neither a fair story nor a broken one, avails anything; but *a new creature.*

If there be a very great alteration visible in a person for a while; if it be not abiding, but he afterwards returns, in a stated manner, to be much as he used to be—it appears to be no change of nature; for nature is an abiding thing. A swine that is of a filthy nature may be washed, but the swinish nature remains; and a dove that is of a cleanly nature may be defiled, but its cleanly nature remains.

Indeed, allowances must be made for the natural temper; conversion does not entirely root out the natural temper; those sins which a man by his natural constitution was most inclined to before his conversion, he may be most apt to fall into still. But yet conversion will make a great alteration even with respect to these sins. Though grace while imperfect does not root out an evil natural temper, yet it is of great power and efficacy with respect to it, to correct it. The change that is wrought in conversion is a universal change. Grace changes a man with respect to whatever is sinful in him; all sin is mortified, constitution sins as well as others. If a man before his conversion was by his natural constitution especially inclined to lasciviousness, or drunkenness, or maliciousness, converting grace will make a great alteration in him, with respect

to these evil dispositions; so that, however he may be still most in danger of these sins, yet they shall no longer have dominion over him, nor will they any more be properly his character. Yea, true repentance does in some respects especially turn a man against his own iniquity, that wherein he has been most guilty and has chiefly dishonoured God. He that forsakes other sins, but saves his leading sin, the iniquity he is chiefly inclined to, is like Saul, when sent against God's enemies the Amalekites with a strict charge to save none of them alive, but *utterly to destroy them, small and great*; who utterly destroyed inferior people, but saved the king, the chief of them all, alive.

In the soul where Christ savingly is, there He lives. He does not only live without it, so as violently to actuate it; but He lives in it, so that it also is alive. Grace in the soul is as much from Christ, as the light in a glass, held out in the sunbeams, is from the sun. But this represents the manner of the communication of grace to the soul only in part; because the glass remains as it was, the nature of it not being at all changed, it is as much without any lightsomeness in itself as ever. But the soul of a saint receives light from the Sun of Righteousness, in such a manner that its nature is changed, and it becomes properly a luminous thing. Not only does the sun shine in the saints, but they also become little suns, partaking of the nature of the Fountain of their light. They do not only drink of the water of life, that flows from

the original Fountain; but this water becomes a fountain in them, *springing up* there and *flowing out.* Grace is compared to a seed implanted, that not only is in the ground, but has hold of it, has root there, and grows there, and is an abiding principle of life and nature there.

As it is with spiritual discoveries and affections given at first conversion, so it is in all illuminations and affections of that kind that persons are the subjects of afterwards. They are all transforming. There is a like divine power and energy in them as in the first discoveries; and they still reach the bottom of the heart, and affect and alter the very nature of the soul, in proportion to the degree in which they are given. And a transformation of nature is continued and carried on by them to the end of life, until it is brought to perfection in glory. Hence the progress of the work of grace in the hearts of the saints is represented in Scripture as a continued conversion and renovation of nature.

There is a sort of high affections that some have from time to time, which leave them without any manner of appearance of an abiding effect. They go off suddenly; so that from the very height of their emotion and seeming rapture, they pass at once to be quite dead and void of all sense and activity. It surely is not wont to be thus with high gracious affections; they leave a sweet savour and relish of divine things on the heart, and a stronger bent of soul towards God and holiness; as Moses' face not only shone while he was in

the Mount, extraordinarily conversing with God, but it continued to shine after he came down from the Mount. When men have been conversing with Christ in an extraordinary manner, there is a sensible effect of it remains upon them. There is something remarkable in their disposition and frame, which, if we take knowledge of and trace to its cause, we shall find it is because they have *been with Jesus.*

VIII.

Truly gracious affections differ from those affections that are false and delusive, in that they tend to, and are attended with, *the lamb-like, dove-like spirit and temper of Jesus Christ*; or, in other words, they naturally beget and promote such a spirit of love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness, and mercy, as appeared in Christ.

The evidence of this in the Scripture is very abundant. If we judge of the nature of Christianity and the proper spirit of the Gospel by the Word of God, this spirit is what may, by way of eminency, be called the Christian spirit; and may be looked upon as the true and distinguishing disposition of the hearts of Christians as Christians. The apostle, designedly declaring the distinguishing marks and fruits of true Christian grace, chiefly insists on the things that appertain to such a temper and spirit as I am speaking of. "*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*"

Everything that appertains to holiness of heart does, indeed, belong to the nature of true Christianity and the character of Christians; but a spirit of holiness as appearing in some particular graces may more especially be called the Christian spirit or temper. There are some amiable qualities and virtues that do more especially agree with the nature of the Gospel constitution and Christian profession; because there is a special agreeableness in them with those divine attributes which God has more remarkably manifested and glorified in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, that is the grand subject of the Christian revelation; and also a special agreeableness with those virtues that were so wonderfully exercised by Jesus Christ towards us in that affair, and the blessed example He hath therein set us; and likewise because they are peculiarly agreeable to the special drift and design of the work of redemption, and the benefits we thereby receive, and the relation that it brings us into to God and one another. And these virtues are such as humility, meekness, love, forgiveness, and mercy. These things therefore especially belong to the character of Christians, as such.

These things are spoken of as what are especially the character of Jesus Christ Himself, the great Head of the Christian Church. And as they are especially the character of Christ, so they are also especially the character of Christians. Christians are Christ-like; none deserves the name of Chris-

tian, that is not so in his prevailing character. "*The new man is renewed, after the image of him that creates him.*" There is grace in Christians answering to grace in Christ, such an answerableness as there is between the wax and the seal; there is character for character. Christians that shine by reflecting the light of the Sun of Righteousness do shine with the same sort of brightness, the same mild, sweet, and pleasant beams. These lamps of the spiritual temple, that are enkindled by fire from heaven, burn with the same sort of flame. The branch is of the same nature with the stock and root, has the same sap, and bears the same sort of fruit. The members have the same kind of life with the Head. It would be strange if Christians should not be of the same temper and spirit that Christ is of, when they are *His flesh and His bone*, yea, are *one spirit*, and live so that *it is not they that live, but Christ that lives in them.* He, the great Shepherd, is Himself a Lamb, and believers are also lambs; all the flock are lambs. "*I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves.*"

That such manner of virtue is the very nature of the Christian spirit, or the spirit that worketh in Christ and in His members, is evident by this, that the dove is the very symbol or emblem chosen of God to represent it. The Spirit that descended on Christ, when He was anointed of the Father, descended on Him *like a dove.* The dove is a noted emblem of meekness, harmlessness, peace, and

love. But the same Spirit that descended on the Head of the Church descends to the members. As Christ was anointed with the Holy Ghost, descending on Him like a dove, so Christians also "*have an anointing from the Holy One.*" And they are anointed with the same oil; it is the same "*precious ointment on the head that goes down to the skirts of the garments.*" And on both it is a spirit of peace and love. The oil on Aaron's garments had the same sweet and inimitable odour with that on his head; the smell of the same sweet spices, Christian affections and a Christian behaviour, is but the flowing out of the savour of Christ's sweet ointments. Because the Church has a dove-like temper and disposition, therefore it is said of her that she has doves' eyes. "*Behold, thou art fair, my love: behold, thou art fair, thou hast doves' eyes.*" The same that is said of Christ. "*His eyes are as the eyes of doves.*" The dove that Noah sent out of the ark, that could find no rest for the sole of her foot until she returned, was a type of a true saint.

Meekness is so much the character of the saints, that the meek and the godly are used as synonymous terms in Scripture; so the wicked and the meek are set in opposition one to another, as wicked and godly: "*Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be:—but the meek shall inherit the earth.*"

It is doubtless very much on this account that Christ represents all His disciples, all the heirs of heaven, as *little children.* Little children are in-

nocent and harmless; they do not do a great deal of mischief in the world; men need not be afraid of them; they are no dangerous sort of persons; their anger does not last long, they do not lay up injuries in high resentment, entertaining deep and rooted malice. So Christians *in malice are children.* Little children are not guileful and deceitful, but plain and simple; they are not versed in the arts of fiction and deceit; and are strangers to artful disguises. They are yieldable and flexible, and not wilful and obstinate; do not trust to their own understanding, but rely on the instructions of parents and others of superior understanding. Here is therefore a fit and lively emblem of the followers of the Lamb. Persons being thus like little children is not only a thing highly commendable, and what Christians approve of and aim at, and which some of extraordinary proficiency do attain to; but it is their universal character, and absolutely necessary in order to entering into the kingdom of heaven; unless Christ was mistaken: "*Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*"

But here some may be ready to say, Is there no such thing as Christian fortitude, and boldness for Christ, being good soldiers in the Christian warfare, and coming out bold against the enemies of Christ and His people?

To which I answer, There doubtless is such a thing. The whole Christian life is compared to a warfare, and fitly so. And the most eminent

Christians are the best soldiers, endued with the greatest degrees of Christian fortitude. And it is the duty of God's people to be steadfast and vigorous in their opposition to the designs and ways of such as are endeavouring to overthrow the kingdom of Christ and the interest of religion. But yet many persons seem to be quite mistaken concerning the nature of Christian fortitude. It is an exceeding diverse thing from a brutal fierceness, or the boldness of beasts of prey. True Christian fortitude consists in strength of mind, through grace, exerted in two things: in ruling and suppressing the evil and unruly passions and affections of the mind; and in steadfastly and freely exerting and following good affections and dispositions, without being hindered by sinful fear or the opposition of enemies. But the passions that are restrained and kept under, in the exercise of this Christian strength and fortitude, are those very passions that are vigorously and violently exerted in a false boldness for Christ. And those affections that are vigorously exerted in true fortitude are those Christian holy affections that are directly contrary to them. Though Christian fortitude appears in withstanding and counteracting the enemies that are without us, yet it much more appears in resisting and suppressing the enemies that are within us; because they are our worst and strongest enemies and have greatest advantage against us. The strength of the good soldier of Jesus Christ appears in nothing more than in steadfastly maintaining the holy calm,

meekness, sweetness, and benevolence of his mind, amidst all the storms, injuries, strange behaviour, and surprising acts and events of this evil and unreasonable world. *"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."*

The directest and surest way in the world to make a right judgment what a holy fortitude is, in fighting with God's enemies, is to look to the Captain of all God's hosts, and our great Leader and Example, and see wherein His fortitude and valour appeared, in His chief conflict, and in the time of the greatest battle that ever was or ever will be fought with these enemies, when He fought with them all alone, and *of the people there was none with Him*, and exercised His fortitude in the highest degree that ever He did, and got that glorious victory that will be celebrated in the praises and triumphs of all the hosts of heaven, throughout all eternity; even to Jesus Christ in the time of His last sufferings. Doubtless here we shall see the fortitude of a holy warrior and champion in the cause of God in its highest perfection and greatest lustre, and an example fit for the soldiers to follow that fight under this Captain. But how did He show His holy boldness and valour at that time? Not in the exercise of any fiery passions; not in fierce and violent speeches, and vehemently declaiming against the intolerable wickedness of opposers, giving them their own in plain terms; but in not opening His mouth when afflicted and

oppressed, in *going as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb*; praying that the Father would forgive His cruel enemies, because *they knew not what they did*; not shedding others' blood, but with all-conquering patience and love shedding His own. Never was the patience, meekness, love, and forgiveness of Christ, in so glorious a manifestation. Never did He appear so much a Lamb, and never did He show so much of the dove-like spirit, as at that time. If therefore we see any of the followers of Christ, in the midst of the most violent, unreasonable, and wicked opposition of God's and his own enemies, maintaining under all this temptation the humility and quietness and gentleness of a lamb, and the harmlessness and love and sweetness of a dove, we may well judge that here is a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

As some are much mistaken concerning the nature of true boldness for Christ, so they are concerning Christian zeal. It is indeed a flame, but a sweet one; or rather it is the heat and fervour of a sweet flame. For the flame of which it is the heat is no other than that of divine love or Christian charity, which is the sweetest and most benevolent thing that is, or can be, in the heart of man or angel. Zeal is the fervour of this flame, as it ardently and vigorously goes out towards the good that is its object, in desires of it and pursuit after it; and so, consequentially, in opposition to the evil that is contrary to it and impedes it. There is indeed opposition, and vigorous opposition, that is

a part of it, or rather is an attendant of it; but it is against things and not persons. Bitterness against the persons of men is no part of it, but is very contrary to it; insomuch that so much the warmer true zeal is, and the higher it is raised, so much the farther are persons from such bitterness, and so much fuller of love both to the evil and to the good. And as to what opposition there is in it to things, it is firstly and chiefly against the evil things in the person himself, who has this zeal; against the enemies of God and holiness that are in his own heart (as these are most in his view, and what he is most to do with); and but secondarily against the sins of others. And therefore there is nothing in a true Christian zeal, that is contrary to that spirit of meekness, gentleness, and love—that spirit of a little child, a lamb, and a dove—that has been spoken of; but it is entirely agreeable to it and tends to promote it.

But, to say something particularly concerning this Christian spirit, as exercised in these three things—forgiveness, love, and mercy—I would observe that the Scripture is very clear and express concerning the absolute necessity of each of these, as belonging to the temper and character of every Christian.

It is so as to a forgiving spirit, or a disposition to overlook and forgive injuries. Christ gives it to us both as a negative and positive evidence; and is express in teaching us that, if we are of such a spirit, it is a sign that we are in a state of forgiveness and favour ourselves; and that, if we are not

of such a spirit, we are not forgiven of God. He seems to take special care that we should take good notice of it, and always bear it on our minds. "*Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.—For, if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*"

And that all true saints are of a loving, benevolent, and beneficent temper, the Scripture is very plain and abundant. Without it, the apostle tells us, though we should *speak with the tongues of men and angels*, we are *as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal*; and that though we *have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge*, yet without this spirit we are *nothing*. And there is no one virtue or disposition of the mind that is so often and so expressly insisted on, in the marks that are laid down in the New Testament whereby to know true Christians. It is often given as a sign that is peculiarly distinguishing by which all may know Christ's disciples, and by which they may know themselves; and is often laid down both as a negative and positive evidence. Christ calls the law of love, by way of eminency, *His commandment*. "*This is my commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you.*"

And the Scripture is as plain as it is possible it should be that none are true saints, but those whose true character it is that they are of a disposition to pity and relieve their fellow-creatures,

who are poor, indigent, and afflicted. "*The righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.*" "*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.*" "*Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.*" Christ in the description He gives of the Day of Judgment (which is the most particular that we have in all the Bible) represents that judgment will be passed that day, according as men have been found to have been of a merciful spirit and practice or otherwise. His design in giving such a description is plainly to possess all His followers with the apprehension that, unless this was their spirit and practice, there is no hope of their being accepted and owned by Him at that day.

Some persons place religion so much in certain transient illuminations and impressions (especially if they are in such a particular method and order), and so little in the spirit and temper persons are of, that they greatly deform religion, and form notions of Christianity quite different from what it is as delineated in the Scriptures. The Scripture knows of no such true Christians as are of a sordid, selfish, cross, and contentious spirit. Nothing can be invented that is a greater absurdity than a morose, hard, close, high-spirited, spiteful, true Christian. We must learn the way of bringing men to rules, and not rules to men, and so straining and stretching the rules of God's Word to take in ourselves, and some of our neighbours, until we make them wholly of none effect.

It is true that allowances must be made for men's natural temper, with regard to these things, as well as others; but not such allowances as to allow men that once were wolves and serpents, to be now converted without any remarkable change in the spirit of their mind. Grace has as great a tendency to restrain and mortify such sins as are contrary to the spirit that has been spoken of, as it has to mortify drunkenness or lasciviousness. Yea, the Scripture represents the change wrought by Gospel grace as especially appearing in an alteration of the former sort. *"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them." "Now put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth."*

IX.

Gracious affections *soften the heart, and are followed with a Christian tenderness of spirit.*

False affections, with the delusion that attends them, finally tend to stupefy the mind, and shut it up against those affections wherein tenderness of heart consists; and the effect of them at last is that persons become less affected with their present and past sins, and less conscientious with respect to future sins, less moved with the warnings and cautions of God's Word or God's chastisements in His providence, more care-

less of the frame of their hearts and the manner and tendency of their behaviour, less quick-sighted to discern what is sinful, less afraid of the appearance of evil, than they were while they were under legal awakenings and fear of hell.

Now they have been the subjects of such and such impressions and affections, and have a high opinion of themselves, and look on their state to be safe; they can be much more easy than before, in living in the neglect of duties that are troublesome and inconvenient; and are much more slow and partial in complying with difficult commands; are in no measure so alarmed at the appearance of their own defects and transgressions; are emboldened to favour themselves more with respect to the labour and painful care and exactness in their walk, and more easily yield to temptations and the solicitations of their lust; and have far less care of their behaviour, when they come into the holy presence of God in the time of public or private worship. Formerly, it may be, under legal convictions, they took much pains in religion, and denied themselves in many things; but now they think themselves out of danger of hell, they very much put off the burden of the cross, and save themselves the trouble of difficult duties, and allow themselves more of the comfort of the enjoyment of their ease and their lusts.

Such persons as these, instead of embracing Christ as their Saviour from sin, trust in Him as the Saviour of their sins; instead of flying to Him

as their refuge from their spiritual enemies, they make use of Him as the defence of their spiritual enemies from God, and to strengthen them against Him. They make Christ the minister of sin, and great officer and vicegerent of the devil, to strengthen his interest, and make him above all things in the world strong against Jehovah; so that they may sin against Him with courage, and without any fear, being effectually secured from restraints by His most solemn warnings and most awful threatenings. They trust in Christ to preserve to them the quiet enjoyment of their sins, and to be their shield to defend them from God's displeasure; while they come close to Him, even to His bosom, the place of His children, to fight against Him, with their mortal weapons hid under their skirts. However, some of these, at the same time, make a great profession of love to God, and assurance of His favour, and great joy in tasting the sweetness of His love.

Gracious affections are of a quite contrary tendency; they turn *a heart of stone* more and more into *a heart of flesh.* A holy love and hope are principles that are vastly more efficacious upon the heart to make it tender, and to fill it with a dread of sin or whatever might displease and offend God, and to engage it to watchfulness and care and strictness, than a slavish fear of hell. Gracious affections, as was observed before, flow out of a contrite heart, or (as the word signifies) a bruised heart, bruised and broken with godly

sorrow; which makes the heart tender, as bruised flesh is tender and easily hurt. Godly sorrow has much greater influence to make the heart tender, than mere legal sorrow from selfish principles.

The tenderness of the heart of a true Christian is elegantly signified by our Saviour, in His comparing such a one to a little child. The flesh of a little child is very tender; so is the heart of one that is new-born. Not only is the flesh of a little child tender, but his mind is tender. A little child has his heart easily moved, wrought upon and bowed; so is a Christian in spiritual things. A little child is apt to be affected with sympathy, to weep with them that weep, and cannot well bear to see others in distress; so it is with a Christian. A little child is easily won by kindness; so is a Christian. A little child is easily affected with grief at temporal evils, and has his heart melted, and falls a-weeping; thus tender is the heart of a Christian with regard to the evil of sin. A little child is easily affrighted at the appearance of outward evils, or anything that threatens his hurt; so is a Christian apt to be alarmed at the appearance of moral evil and anything that threatens the hurt of the soul. A little child when he meets enemies or fierce beasts is not apt to trust his own strength, but flies to his parents for refuge; so a saint is not self-confident in engaging spiritual enemies, but flies to Christ. A little child is apt to be suspicious of evil in places of danger, afraid in the dark, afraid when

left alone, or far from home; so is a saint apt to be sensible of his spiritual dangers, jealous of himself, full of fear when he cannot see his way plain before him, afraid to be left alone, and to be at a distance from God. A little child is apt to be afraid of superiors, and to dread their anger, and tremble at their frowns and threatenings; so is a true saint with respect to God. A little child approaches superiors with awe; so do the saints approach God with holy awe and reverence. Holy fear is so much the nature of true godliness, that it is called in Scripture by no other name more frequently than the *fear* of God.

But here some may object and say, Is there no such thing as a holy boldness in prayer and the duties of divine worship? I answer, there is doubtless such a thing; and it is chiefly to be found in eminent saints, persons of great degrees of faith and love. But this holy boldness is not in the least opposite to reverence; though it be to disunion and servility. It abolishes or lessens that disposition which arises from moral distance or alienation; and also distance of relation, as that of a slave: but not at all that which becomes the natural distance, whereby we are infinitely inferior. No boldness in poor sinful worms of the dust, that have a right sight of God and themselves, will prompt them to approach to God with less fear and reverence than spotless and glorious angels in heaven, who cover their faces before His throne. Rebecca—who in her marriage with Isaac, in

almost all its circumstances, was manifestly a great type of the Church, the spouse of Christ—when she meets Isaac, lights off from her camel, and takes a veil, and covers herself; although she was brought to him as his bride, to be with him in the nearest relation and most intimate union that mankind are ever united one to another in. Elijah, that great prophet, who had so much holy familiarity with God, at a time of special nearness to God, even when he conversed with Him in the Mount, wrapped his face in his mantle. Which was not because he was terrified with any servile fear, by the terrible wind and earthquake and fire; but after these were all over, and God spake to him as a friend, in *a still small voice.* And Moses, with whom God spake face to face as a man speaks with his friend, and who was distinguished from all the prophets in the familiarity with God that he was admitted to, at a time when he was brought nearest of all—when God showed him His glory in that same Mount—"*made haste, and bowed his head towards the earth, and worshipped.*"

There is in some persons a most unsuitable and insufferable boldness, in their addresses to the great Jehovah, in an ostentation of eminent nearness and familiarity; the very thoughts of which would make them shrink into nothing, with horror and confusion, if they saw the distance that is between God and them. They are like the Pharisee, that boldly came up near in a confidence of his own eminency in holiness. Whereas, if they

saw their vileness, they would be more like the publican, that "*stood afar off, and durst not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven; but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*" It becomes such sinful creatures as we to approach a holy God (although with faith, and without terror, yet) with contrition and penitent shame and confusion of face.

Grace tends to give the soul a further and better conviction of the same things concerning sin, that it was convinced of under a legal work of the Spirit of God—its great contrariety to the will and law and honour of God, the greatness of God's hatred of it and displeasure against it, and the dreadful punishment it exposes to and deserves. And not only so, but it convinces the soul of something further concerning sin, that it saw nothing of while only under legal convictions; and that is the infinitely hateful nature of sin, and its dreadfulness upon that account. And this makes the heart tender with respect to sin; like David's heart, that smote him when he had cut off Saul's skirt. The heart of a true penitent is like a burnt child that dreads the fire. Whereas, on the contrary, he that has had a counterfeit repentance, and false comforts and joys, is like iron that has been suddenly heat and quenched; it becomes much harder than before. A false conversion puts an end to convictions of conscience; and so either takes away, or much diminishes, that conscientiousness which was manifested under a work of the law.

All gracious affections have a tendency to promote this Christian tenderness of heart—not only a godly sorrow, but also a gracious joy. "*Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*" As also a gracious hope. "*Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him; upon them that hope in his mercy.*" Yea, the most confident and assured hope, that is truly gracious, has this tendency. The higher a holy hope is raised, the more there is of this Christian tenderness. The banishing of a servile fear, by a holy assurance, is attended with a proportionable increase of a reverential fear. The diminishing of the fear of the fruits of God's displeasure in future punishment, is attended with a proportionable increase of fear of His displeasure itself; the diminishing of the fear of hell, with an increase of the fear of sin. The vanishing of jealousies of the person's state is attended with a proportionable increase of jealousy of heart, in a distrust of its strength, wisdom, stability, faithfulness. The less apt he is to be afraid of natural evil, having his heart fixed in trusting in God, and so not afraid of evil tidings, the more apt he is to be alarmed with the appearance of moral evil, or the evil of sin. As he has more holy boldness, so he has less of self-confidence, and a forward assuming boldness, and more modesty. As he is more sure than others of deliverance from hell, so he has more of a sense of the desert of it. He is less apt than others to be shaken in faith; but more apt than others to be moved with solemn warnings,

and with God's frowns, and with the calamities of others. He has the firmest comfort, but the softest heart: richer than others, but poorest of all in spirit: the tallest and strongest saint, but the least and tenderest child among them.

X.

Another thing wherein those affections that are truly gracious and holy differ from those that are false, is *beautiful symmetry and proportion.*

Not that the symmetry of the virtues, and gracious affections of the saints, in this life is perfect: it oftentimes is in many things defective, through the imperfection of grace, for want of proper instructions, through errors in judgment, or some particular unhappiness of natural temper, or defects in education, and many other disadvantages that might be mentioned. But yet there is in no wise that monstrous disproportion in gracious affections, and the various parts of true religion in the saints, that is very commonly to be observed in the false religion and counterfeit graces of hypocrites.

In the truly holy affections of the saints is found that proportion, which is the natural consequence of the universality of their sanctification. They have the whole image of Christ upon them: they have *put off the old man, and have put on the new man* entire in all its parts and members. *It hath pleased the Father that in Christ all fulness should dwell:* there is in Him every grace; He is full of grace

and truth: and they that are Christ's, do "*of his fulness receive grace for grace*"; that is, there is every grace in them which is in Christ. There is no grace in Christ, but there is its image in believers to answer it; the image is a true image; and there is something of the same beautiful proportion in the image which is in the original; there is feature for feature, and member for member. There is symmetry and beauty in God's workmanship.

It is with hypocrites as it was with Ephraim of old, at a time when God greatly complains of his hypocrisy. "*Ephraim is a cake not turned*," half roasted and half raw. There is commonly no manner of uniformity in their affections.

There is in many of them a great partiality with regard to the several kinds of religious affections: great affections in some things, and no manner of proportion in others. A holy hope and a holy fear go together in the saints. But in some of these is the most confident hope, while they are void of reverence, self-jealousy, and caution, and to a great degree cast off fear. In the saints, joy and holy fear go together, though the joy be never so great. But many of these rejoice without trembling; their joy is of that sort that it is truly opposite to godly fear.

But, particularly, one great difference between saints and hypocrites is this, that the joy and comfort of the former is attended with godly sorrow and mourning for sin. They have not only

sorrow to prepare them for their first comfort, but after they are comforted and their joy established. A true saint is like a little child in this respect. He never had any godly sorrow before he was born again, but since has it often in exercise; as a little child, before it is born and while it remains in darkness, never cries, but as soon as ever it sees the light it begins to cry, and thenceforward is often crying. Although Christ *hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows*, so that we are freed from the sorrow of punishment, and may now sweetly feed upon the comforts Christ hath purchased for us, yet that hinders not but that our feeding on these comforts should be attended with the sorrow of repentance; as of old, the children of Israel were commanded evermore to feed upon the paschal lamb, with bitter herbs. True saints are spoken of in Scripture, not only as those that have mourned for sin, but as those that do mourn, whose manner it is still to mourn. "*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*"

Not only is there often in hypocrites an essential deficiency as to the various kinds of religious affections, but also a strange partiality and disproportion in the same affections with regard to different objects.

Thus as to the affection of love, some make high pretences and a great show of love to God and Christ, and it may be have been greatly affected with what they have heard or thought concerning Them; but they have not a spirit of love and

benevolence towards men, but are disposed to contention, envy, revenge, and evil-speaking; and will, it may be, suffer an old grudge to rest in their bosoms towards a neighbour for seven years together, if not twice seven years; living in real ill-will and bitterness of spirit towards him; and, it may be, in their dealings with their neighbours are not very strict and conscientious in observing the rule of "*doing to others as they would that they should do to them.*" And, on the other hand, there are others that appear as if they had a great deal of benevolence to men, are very good-natured and generous in their way, but have no love to God.

And as to love to men, there are some that have flowing affections to some; but their love is far from being of so extensive and universal a nature as a truly Christian love is. They are full of dear affections to some, and full of bitterness towards others. They are knit to their own party, them that approve of them; but are fierce against those that oppose and dislike them. Some show a great affection to their neighbours, and pretend to be ravished with the company of the children of God abroad; and at the same time are uncomfortable and churlish towards their wives and other near relations at home, and are very negligent of relative duties. And as to the great love to sinners and opposers of religion, and the great concern for their souls, that there is an appearance of in some, even to extreme distress and agony, singling out a particular person from among a multitude for its

object, there being at the same time no general compassion to sinners that are in equally miserable circumstances, but what is in a monstrous disproportion; this seems not to be of the nature of a gracious affection. Without doubt some saints have been in great distress for the souls of particular persons, so as to be as it were in travail for them. But when persons appear, at particular times, in racking agonies for the soul of some single person, far beyond what has been usually heard or read of in eminent saints, but appear to be persons that have a spirit of meek and fervent love, charity, and compassion to mankind in general in a far less degree than they; I say, such agonies are greatly to be suspected, for reasons already given, namely, that the Spirit of God is wont to give graces and gracious affections in a beautiful symmetry and proportion.

And furthermore, it is a sign that affections are not of the right sort, if persons seem to be much affected with the bad qualities of their fellow-Christians, as the coldness and lifelessness of other saints, but are in no proportion affected with their own defects and corruptions. A true Christian may be affected with the coldness and unsavouriness of other saints, and may mourn much over it: but at the same time, he is not so apt to be affected with the badness of anybody's heart as his own; this is most in his view; this he is most quick-sighted to discern; this he sees most of the aggravations of, and is most ready to cry

out of. And a lesser degree of virtue will bring him to pity himself and be concerned at his own calamities, than rightly to be affected with others' calamities. And if men have not attained to the less, we may determine they never attained to the greater.

And here, by the way, I would observe that it may be laid down as a general rule, that, if persons pretend that they come to high attainments in religion, but have never yet arrived to the lesser attainments, it is a sign of a vain pretence. As if persons pretend that they have got beyond mere morality, to live a spiritual and divine life; but really have not come to be so much as moral persons: or pretend to be greatly affected with the wickedness of their hearts, and are not affected with the palpable violations of God's commands in their practice, which is a lesser attainment: or if they pretend to be brought to be even willing to be damned for the glory of God, but have no forwardness to suffer a little in their estates and names and worldly convenience, for the sake of their duty: or pretend that they are not afraid to venture their souls upon Christ, and commit their all to God, trusting to His bare word and the faithfulness of His promises for their eternal welfare; but at the same time, have not confidence enough in God to dare to trust Him with a little of their estates, bestowed to pious and charitable uses—I say, when it is thus with persons, their pretences are manifestly vain. He

that is in a journey, and imagines he has got far beyond such a place in his road, and has never yet come to it, must be mistaken; and he is not yet arrived to the top of the hill, that never yet got half-way thither. But this by the way.

The same that has been observed of the affection of love, is also to be observed of other religious affections. Those that are true extend in some proportion to the various things that are their due and proper objects; but when they are false, they are commonly strangely disproportionate. So it is with religious desires and longings; these in the saints are to those things that are spiritual and excellent in general, and that in some proportion to their excellency, importance, or necessity, or their near concern in them; but in false longings it is often far otherwise. They will strangely run, with an impatient vehemence, after something of less importance, when other things of greater importance are neglected. Thus, for instance, some persons from time to time are attended with a vehement inclination, and unaccountably violent pressure, to declare to others what they experience, and to exhort others; when there is at the same time no inclination, in any measure equal to it, to other things that true Christianity has as great, yea, a greater tendency to; as the pouring out the soul before God in secret prayer and praise to Him, and more conformity to Him, and living more to His glory. We read in Scripture of

groanings that cannot be uttered, and *soul-breakings for the longing it hath,* and *longings, thirstings,* and *pantings,* much more frequently to these latter things than the former.

As there is a much greater disproportion in the exercises of false affections than of true as to different objects, so there is also as to different times. For although true Christians are not always alike—yea, there is very great difference at different times, and the best have reason to be greatly ashamed of their unsteadiness—yet there is no wise that instability and inconstancy in the hearts of those who are true virgins, "*that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,*" which is in false-hearted professors. The righteous man is truly said to be one whose *heart is fixed, trusting in God,* and to have his *heart established with grace,* and to *hold on his way.*

If, therefore, persons are religious only by fits and starts; if they now and then seem to be raised up to the clouds in their affections, and then suddenly fall down again, lose all, and become quite careless and carnal, and this is their manner of carrying on religion; if they appear greatly moved and mightily engaged in religion only in extraordinary seasons, in the time of a remarkable out-pouring of the Spirit, or other uncommon dispensation of providence, or upon the real or supposed receipt of some great mercy, but quickly return to such a frame that their hearts are chiefly upon other things,

—I say, when it is thus with persons, it is a sign of the unsoundness of affections. They are like the waters in the time of a shower of rain, which, during the shower and a little after, run like a brook and flow abundantly, but are presently quite dry; and when another shower comes, then they will flow again. Whereas a true saint is like a stream from a living spring which, though it may be greatly increased by a shower of rain and diminished in time of drought, yet constantly runs; or like a tree planted by such a stream, that has a supply at the root and is always green, even in time of the greatest drought. Many hypocrites are like comets, that appear for a while with a mighty blaze, but are very unsteady and irregular in their motion, and their blaze soon disappears, and they appear but once in a great while. But the true saints are like the fixed stars, which though they rise and set, and are often clouded, yet are steadfast in their orb, and may truly be said to shine with a constant light.

And as there is a strange unevenness and disproportion in false affections at different times, so there often is in different places. Some are greatly affected when in company, but have nothing that bears any manner of proportion to it in secret, in close meditation, secret prayer, and conversing with God, when alone and separated from all the world. A true Christian doubtless delights in religious fellowship and Christian con-

versation, and finds much to affect his heart in it; but he also delights at times to retire from all mankind, to converse with God in solitary places. And this also has its peculiar advantages for fixing his heart and engaging his affections. True religion disposes persons to be much alone for holy meditation and prayer. So it wrought in Isaac, and, which is much more, so it wrought in Jesus Christ. How often do we read of His retiring into mountains and solitary places, for holy converse with His Father!

It is difficult to conceal great affections, but yet gracious affections are of a much more silent and secret nature than those that are counterfeit. So it is with the gracious sorrow of the saints. So it is with their sorrow for their own sins. Thus the future mourning of true penitents, at the beginning of the latter-day glory, is represented as being so secret as to be hidden from the companions of their bosom. "*And the land shall mourn, every family apart.*" So it is with their sorrow for the sins of others. "*If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride.*" So it is with gracious joys; they are *hidden manna.*

Not but that we have also instances of great privileges that the saints have received when with others; or that there is not much in Christian conversation, and social and public worship, tending to refresh and rejoice the hearts of the saints. But this is all that I aim at by what has been said, to show that it is the nature of true grace,

that, however it loves Christian society in its place, yet in a peculiar manner it delights in retirement and secret converse with God. So that, if persons appear greatly engaged in social religion, and but little in with the religion of the closet, and are often highly affected when with others, and but little moved when they have none but God and Christ to converse with, it looks very darkly upon their religion.

XI.

Another great and very distinguishing difference between gracious affections and others is, that gracious affections, *the higher they are raised, the more is a spiritual appetite and longing of soul after spiritual attainments increased.* On the contrary, false affections rest satisfied in themselves.[1]

The more a true saint loves God with a gracious love, the more he desires to love Him, and the more uneasy is he at his want of love to Him. The more he hates sin, the more he desires to hate it, and laments that he has so much remaining love to it. The more he mourns for sin, the more he longs to mourn for sin. The more his heart is broke, the more he desires it should be broke. The more he thirsts and longs after God and holiness, the more he longs to long, and to breathe out his very soul in longings after God. The

[1] "There is in true grace an infinite circle: a man by thirsting receives, and receiving thirsts for more."—SHEPARD, *Parable of the Ten Virgins.*

kindling and raising of gracious affections is like kindling a flame; the higher it is raised, the more ardent it is; and the more it burns, the more vehemently does it tend and seek to burn. *"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark.—Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded."*

But here some may object and say, How is this consistent with what all allow, that spiritual enjoyments are of a soul-satisfying nature?

I answer, its being so will appear to be not at all inconsistent with what has been said, if it be considered in what manner spiritual enjoyments are said to be of a soul-satisfying nature. Certainly they are not so in that sense that they are of so cloying a nature, that he who has anything of them, though but in a very imperfect degree, desires no more. But spiritual enjoyments are of a soul-satisfying nature in the following respects:—

1. They in their kind and nature are fully adapted to the nature, capacity, and need of the soul of man. So that those who find them desire no other kind of enjoyments; they sit down fully contented with that kind of happiness which they have, desiring no change, nor inclining to wander about any more saying, *"Who will show us any good?"* The soul is never cloyed, never weary; but perpetually giving up itself, with all its powers, to this happiness.—But not that those, who have something of this happiness, desire no more of the

same. 2. They are satisfying also in this respect, that they answer the expectation of the appetite. When the appetite is high to anything, the expectation is consequently so. Appetite to a particular object implies expectation in its nature. This expectation is not satisfied by worldly enjoyments. But spiritual enjoyments fully answer and satisfy the expectation. 3. The gratification and pleasure of spiritual enjoyments is permanent. It is not so with worldly enjoyments. They in a sense satisfy particular appetites; but the appetite, in being satisfied, is glutted, and then the pleasure is over; and, as soon as that is over, the general appetite of human nature after happiness returns, but is empty and without anything to satisfy it. So that the glutting of a particular appetite does but take away from, and leave empty, the general thirst of nature. 4. Spiritual good is satisfying, as there is enough in it to satisfy the soul as to degree, if obstacles were but removed, and the enjoying faculty duly applied. There is room enough here for the soul to extend itself; here is an infinite ocean of it. If men be not satisfied here, in degree of happiness, the cause is with themselves; it is because they do not *open their mouths* wide enough.

But these things do not argue that a soul has no appetite excited after more of the same, that has tasted a little; or that his appetite will not increase, the more he tastes, until he comes to fulness of enjoyment; as bodies that are attracted to the globe of the earth tend to it more strongly, the

nearer they come to the attracting body, and are not at rest out of the centre. Spiritual good is of a satisfying nature; and for that very reason, the soul that tastes and knows its nature will thirst after it, and a fulness of it, that it may be satisfied. And the more he experiences, and the more he knows this excellent, unparalleled, exquisite, and satisfying sweetness, the more earnestly will he hunger and thirst for more, until he comes to perfection. And therefore this is the nature of spiritual affections, that the greater they be, the greater the appetite and longing is after grace and holiness.

But with those joys and other religious affections, that are false and counterfeit, it is otherwise. If before there was a great desire of some sort after grace, as these affections rise, that desire ceases or is abated. And especially when false affections are raised very high, do they put an end to longings after grace and holiness. The man now is far from appearing to himself a poor empty creature; on the contrary, he is *rich and increased with goods*, and hardly conceives of anything more excellent than what he has already attained.

Thus there is an end to many persons' earnestness in seeking, after they have once obtained that which they call their conversion; or, at least, after they have had those high affections that make them fully confident of it. Before, while they looked upon themselves as in a state of nature, they were engaged in seeking after God and Christ, and cried earnestly for grace, and strove in the use

of means; but now they act as though they thought their work was done; they live upon their first work, or some high experiences that are past; and there is an end to their crying and striving after God and grace. Whereas the holy principles that actuate a true saint have a far more powerful influence to stir him up to earnestness in seeking God and holiness, than servile fear. Hence *seeking God* is spoken of as one of the distinguishing characters of the saints; and *those that seek God* is one of the names by which the godly are called. And the Scriptures everywhere represent the seeking, striving, and labour of a Christian, as being chiefly after his conversion, and his conversion as being but the beginning of his work. And almost all that is said in the New Testament, of men's *watching, giving earnest heed to themselves, running the race that is set before them, striving and agonizing, wrestling not with flesh and blood but principalities and powers, fighting, putting on the whole armour of God, and standing, pressing forward, reaching forth, continuing instant in prayer, crying to God day and night:* I say, almost all that is said in the New Testament of these things, is spoken of and directed to the saints. Where these things are applied to sinners seeking conversion once, they are spoken of the saints' prosecution of the great business of their high calling ten times. But many in these days have got into a strange anti-scriptural way, of having all their striving and wrestling over before they are converted; and so having an easy time of

it afterwards, to sit down and enjoy their sloth and indolence.

There is an inward burning desire that a saint has after holiness, as natural to the new creature as vital heat is to the body. There is a holy breathing and panting after the Spirit of God, to increase holiness, as natural to a holy nature as breathing is to a living body. And holiness or sanctification is more directly the object of it, than any manifestation of God's love and favour. This is the *meat and drink* that is the object of the spiritual appetite. Where we read in Scripture of the desires, longings, and thirstings of the saints, righteousness and God's laws are much more frequently mentioned as the objects of them than anything else. Grace is the godly man's treasure. Godliness is the gain that he is covetous and greedy of. Hypocrites long for discoveries, more for the present comfort of the discovery, and for the high manifestation of God's love in it, than for any sanctifying influence of it. But neither a longing after great discoveries or after great tastes of the love of God, nor a longing to be in heaven, nor a longing to die, is in any measure so distinguishing a mark of true saints as longing after a more holy heart, and living a more holy life.

But I am come now to the last distinguishing mark of holy affections that I shall mention.

XII.

Gracious and holy affections *have their exercise and*

fruit in Christian practice.—I mean, they have that influence and power upon him who is the subject of them that they cause that a practice, which is universally conformed to and directed by Christian rules, should be the practice and business of his life.

This implies three things: 1. That his behaviour or practice in the world be universally conformed to, and directed by, Christian rules. 2. That he makes a business of such a holy practice above all things; that it be a business which he is chiefly engaged in, and devoted to, and pursues with highest earnestness and diligence; so that he may be said to make this practice of religion eminently his work and business. And, 3. That he persists in it to the end of life; so that it may be said not only to be his business at certain seasons, the business of Sabbath-days, or certain extraordinary times, or the business of a month or a year or of seven years, or his business under certain circumstances; but the business of his life; it being that business which he perseveres in through all changes, and under all trials, as long as he lives.

The necessity of each of these in all true Christians is most clearly and fully taught in the Word of God.

1. It is necessary that men should be universally obedient. "*Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.—And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known*

him." "*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*" "*Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*"

If one member only be corrupt, and we do not cut it off, it will carry the whole body to hell. Saul was commanded to slay all God's enemies, the Amalekites; and he slew all but Agag, and the saving him alive proved his ruin. Caleb and Joshua entered into God's promised rest, because they *wholly followed the Lord.* Naaman's hypocrisy appeared in that, however he seemed to be greatly affected with gratitude to God for healing his leprosy, and engaged to serve him, yet in one thing he desired to be excused. And Herod, though he feared John, and observed him, and heard him gladly, and did many things, yet was condemned in that one thing he would not hearken to him, even in parting with his beloved Herodias. So that it is necessary that men should part with their dearest iniquities, which are as their right hand and right eye, sins that most easily beset them, and which they are most exposed to by their natural inclination, evil customs, or particular circumstances, as well as others. As Joseph would not make known himself to his brethren who had sold him, until Benjamin the beloved child of the family, that was most hardly parted with, was delivered up; no more will Christ reveal His love to us, until we part with our dearest lusts, and until we are brought to comply with the most difficult duties and those that we have the greatest aversion to.

And it is of importance that it should be observed that, in order to a man's being truly said to be universally obedient, his obedience must not only consist in negatives, or in universally avoiding wicked practices, consisting in sins of commission; but he must also be universal in the positives of religion. Sins of omission are as much breaches of God's commands as sins of commission. A man therefore cannot be said to be universally obedient, and of a Christian conversation, only because he is no thief, nor oppressor, nor fraudulent person, nor drunkard, nor tavern-haunter, nor whoremaster, nor rioter, nor night-walker, nor unclean, nor profane in his language, nor slanderer, nor liar, nor furious, nor malicious, nor reviler. He is falsely said to be of a conversation that becomes the Gospel, who goes thus far and no farther. But, in order to this, it is necessary that he should also be of a serious, religious, devout, humble, meek, forgiving, peaceful, respectful, condescending, benevolent, merciful, charitable and beneficent walk and conversation. Without such things as these, he does not obey the laws of Christ.

2. In order to men's being true Christians, it is necessary that they prosecute the business of religion and the service of God with great earnestness and diligence, as the work which they devote themselves to, and make the main business of their lives.

The kingdom of heaven is not to be taken but *by violence.* Without earnestness there is no getting

along in that narrow way that leads to life; and so no arriving at that state of glorious life and happiness which it leads to. Without earnest labour, there is no ascending the steep and high hill of Zion; and so no arriving at the heavenly city on the top of it. Without a constant laboriousness, there is no stemming the swift stream in which we swim; so as ever to come to that fountain of water of life that is at the head of it. There is need that we should "*watch and pray always.*" There is need of our "*putting on the whole armour of God, and doing all to stand,*" in order to our avoiding a total overthrow and being utterly destroyed by the "*fiery darts of the devil.*" There is need that we should "*forget the things that are behind, and be reaching forth to the things that are before and pressing towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord,*" in order to our obtaining that prize. Slothfulness in the service of God, in His professed servants, is as damning as open rebellion.

3. Every true Christian perseveres in this way of universal obedience, and diligent and earnest service of God, through all the various kinds of trials that he meets with, to the end of life.

By trials I mean those things that occur, and that a professor meets with in his course, that do especially render his continuance in his duty and faithfulness to God, difficult to nature. These things are from time to time called in Scripture by the name of trials or temptations (which are words of the same signification). These are of various

kinds. There are many things that render continuance in the way of duty difficult, by their tendency to cherish and foment, or to stir up and provoke lusts and corruptions. Many things make it hard to continue in the way of duty, by their being of an alluring nature, and having a tendency to entice persons to sin; or by their tendency to take off restraints and embolden them in iniquity. Other things are trials of the soundness and steadfastness of professors, by their tendency to make their duty appear terrible to them, and so to affright and drive them from it; such as the sufferings which their duty will expose them to—pain, ill-will, contempt, and reproach, or loss of outward possessions and comforts. If persons, after they have made a profession of religion, live any considerable time in this world, which is so full of changes and so full of evil, it cannot be otherwise than that they should meet with many trials of their sincerity and steadfastness. And besides, it is God's manner in His providence to bring trials on His professing friends and servants designedly, that He may manifest them, and may exhibit sufficient matter of conviction of the state which they are in, to their own consciences and oftentimes to the world; as appears by innumerable Scriptures.

True saints may be guilty of some kinds and degrees of backsliding, and may be foiled by particular temptations, and may fall into sin, yea great sins; but they can never fall away so as to grow weary of religion and the service of God, and habi-

tually to dislike it and neglect it, either on its own account, or on account of the difficulties that attend it. Nor can they ever fall away so as habitually to be more engaged in other things than in the business of religion; or so that it should become their way and manner to serve something else more than God: or so as statedly to cease to serve God with such earnestness and diligence, as still to be habitually devoted and given up to the business of religion; unless those words of Christ can fall to the ground, "*Ye cannot serve two masters,*" and those of the apostle, "*He that will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God*"; and unless a saint can change his God, and yet be a true saint. Nor can a true saint ever fall away so that it shall come to this, that ordinarily there shall be no remarkable difference in his walk and behaviour since his conversion from what was before. They that are truly converted are new men, *new creatures*; new, not only within, but without; they are sanctified throughout, in *spirit, soul, and body*; *old things are passed away, all things are become new*; they have new hearts, and new eyes, new ears, new tongues, new hands, new feet; a new conversation and practice; and they *walk in newness of life*, and continue to do so to the end of life. And they that fall away and cease visibly to do so, it is a sign they never were *risen with Christ.* And especially when men's opinion of their being converted, and so in a safe estate, is the very cause of their coming to this, it is a most evident sign of their hypocrisy.

Thus I have explained what exercise and fruit I mean, when I say that gracious affections have their exercise and fruit in Christian practice.

The reason of it appears from this, that gracious affections do arise from those operations and influences which are spiritual, and that the inward principle from whence they flow is something divine, a communication of God, a participation of the divine nature, Christ living in the heart, the Holy Spirit dwelling there in union with the faculties of the soul, as an internal vital principle, exerting His own proper nature in the exercise of those faculties. This is sufficient to show us why true grace should have such activity, power, and efficacy. No wonder that that which is divine is powerful and effectual; for it has omnipotence on its side. If God dwells in the heart, and is vitally united to it, He will show that He is a God by the efficacy of His operation. Christ is not in the heart of a saint as in a sepulchre, or as a dead Saviour that does nothing; but as in His temple, and as One that is alive from the dead. For in the heart where Christ savingly is, there He lives and exerts Himself after *the power of that endless life* that He received at His resurrection. And thus it is that holy affections have a governing power in the course of a man's life. A statue may look very much like a real man, and a beautiful man; yea, it may have, in its appearance to the eye, the resemblance of a very lively, strong, and active man; but yet an inward principle of life

and strength is wanting; and therefore it does nothing, it brings nothing to pass, there is no action or operation to answer the show. False discoveries and affections do not go deep enough to reach and govern the spring of men's actions and practice. But gracious affections go to the very bottom of the heart, and take hold of the very inmost springs of life and activity. The principal evidence of their power is in their being practical; in conquering the will, and conquering the lusts and corruptions of men, and carrying men on in the way of holiness, through all temptation, difficulty, and opposition.

Again, the reason why gracious affections have their exercise and effect in Christian practice appears from this (which has also been before observed), that "the first objective ground of gracious affections is the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things, as they are in themselves, and not any conceived relation they bear to self or self-interest." This shows why holy affections will cause men to be holy in their practice universally. What makes men partial in religion is that they seek themselves and not God in their religion, and close with religion not for its own excellent nature but only to serve a turn. He that closes with religion only to serve a turn, will close with no more of it than he imagines serves that turn; but he that closes with religion for its own excellent and lovely nature closes with all that has that nature: he that embraces

religion for its own sake embraces the whole of religion.

The same appears from what has been observed of the nature of that spiritual knowledge which is the foundation of all holy affection, as consisting in a sense and view of that excellency in divine things which is supreme and transcendent. For hereby these things appear, above all others, worthy to be chosen and adhered to. By the sight of the transcendent glory of Christ, true Christians see Him worthy to be followed, and so are powerfully drawn after Him; they see Him worthy that they should forsake all for Him. By the sight of that superlative amiableness, they are thoroughly disposed to be subject to Him, and engaged to labour with earnestness and activity in His service, and made willing to go through all difficulties for His sake. And it is the discovery of this divine excellency of Christ, that makes them constant to Him.

The reason of this practical tendency and issue of gracious affections further appears from what has been observed of such affections being "attended with a thorough conviction of the judgment of the reality and certainty of divine things." No wonder that they who were never thoroughly convinced that there is any reality in the things of religion, will never be at the labour and trouble of an earnest, universal, and persevering practice of religion, through all difficulties, self-denials, and sufferings. But, on the other hand, they who are

thoroughly convinced of the certain truth of those things must needs be governed by them in their practice. For the things revealed in the Word of God are so great, and so infinitely more important than all other things, that it is inconsistent with human nature that a man should fully believe the truth of them, and not be influenced by them above all things in his practice.

Again, the reason of this expression and effect of holy affections in the practice appears from what has been observed of "a change of nature, accompanying such affections." Without a change of nature, men's practice will not be thoroughly changed. Until the tree be made good, the fruit will not be good. *Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles.* Nature is a more powerful principle of action than anything that opposes it. Though it may be violently restrained for a while, it will finally overcome that which restrains it. It is like the stream of a river, it may be stopped a while with a dam; but, if nothing be done to dry the fountain, it will not be stopped always; it will have a course, either in its old channel or a new one. When a natural man denies his lust, and lives a strict, religious life, and seems humble, painful, and earnest in religion, it is not natural, it is all a force against nature; as when a stone is violently thrown upwards; but that force will be gradually spent; yet nature will remain in its full strength, and so prevails again, and the stone returns downwards. As long as

corrupt nature is not mortified, but the principle left whole in a man, it is a vain thing to expect that it should not govern. But if the old nature be indeed mortified, and a new and heavenly nature infused, then may it well be expected that men will walk in newness of life, and continue to do so to the end of their days.

Thus we see how the tendency of holy affections to Christian practice appears from each of those characteristics that have been before spoken of.

And this point may be further illustrated and confirmed, if it be considered that the Holy Scriptures do abundantly place sincerity and soundness in religion in making a full choice of God as our only Lord and portion, forsaking all for Him, and in a full determination of the will for God and Christ on counting the cost; in our hearts closing and complying with the religion of Jesus Christ with all that belongs to it, embracing it with all its difficulties, hating our dearest earthly enjoyments, and even our own lives, for Christ; giving up ourselves, with all that we have, wholly and for ever, unto Christ, without keeping back anything or making any reserve;—or, in one word, in the great duty of self-denial for Christ, making ourselves nothing that He may be all. Now, surely, having a heart to forsake all for Christ tends to actually forsaking all for Him, so far as there is occasion, and we have the trial. A having a heart to deny ourselves for Christ tends to a denying ourselves indeed, when Christ and self-interest

stand in competition. A giving up ourselves, with all that we have, in our hearts, without making any reserve there, tends to our behaving ourselves universally as His, as subject to His will and devoted to His ends. Our hearts entirely closing with the religion of Jesus, with all that belongs to it, and as attended with all its difficulties, upon a deliberate counting the cost, tends to a universal closing with the same in act and deed, and actually going through all the difficulties that we meet with in the way of religion, and so holding out with patience and perseverance.

The tendency of grace in the heart to holy practice is very direct, and the connection most natural, close, and necessary. True grace is not an inactive thing; there is nothing in heaven or earth of a more active nature; for it is life itself, and the most active kind of life, even spiritual and divine life. It is no barren thing; there is nothing in the universe that in its nature has a greater tendency to fruit. Godliness in the heart has a direct relation to practice, as a fountain has to a stream, or as the luminous nature of the sun has to beams sent forth, or as life has to breathing or the beating of the pulse or any other vital act; or as a habit or principle of action has to action; for it is the very nature and notion of grace, that it is a principle of holy action or practice. This fruit of holy practice is what every grace, and every discovery, and every individual thing,

which belongs to Christian experience, has a direct tendency to.

The constant and indissoluble connection that there is between a Christian principle and profession in the true saints, and the fruit of holy practice in their lives, was typified of old in the frame of the golden candlestick in the Temple. It is beyond doubt that the golden candlestick with its seven branches and seven lamps was a type of the Church of Christ. The Holy Ghost Himself has been pleased to put that matter out of doubt by representing His Church by such a golden candlestick, with seven lamps, in the fourth chapter of Zechariah, and representing the seven churches of Asia by seven golden candlesticks, in the first chapter of the Revelation. That golden candlestick in the temple was everywhere, throughout its whole frame, made with knops and flowers.

The word translated knop signifies apple or pomegranate. There was *a knop and a flower, a knop and a flower*: wherever there was a flower, there was an apple or pomegranate with it; the flower and the fruit were constantly connected, without fail. The flower contained the principles of the fruit, and a beautiful promising appearance of it; and it never was a deceitful appearance; the principle or show of fruit had evermore real fruit attending it, or succeeding it. So it is in the Church of Christ: there is the principle of fruit in grace in the heart; there is an amiable profession,

signified by the open flowers of the candlestick; and there is answerable fruit in holy practice, constantly attending this principle and profession. Every branch of the golden candlestick, thus composed of golden apples and flowers, was crowned with a burning, shining lamp on the top of it. For it is by this means that the saints *shine as lights in the world*, by making a fair and good profession of religion, and by having their profession evermore joined with answerable fruit in practice.

Much the same thing seems to be signified by the ornaments on the skirt of the ephod, the garment of Aaron the high priest; which were golden bells and pomegranates. That these skirts of Aaron's garment represent the Church, or the saints (that are, as it were, the garment of Christ) is manifest; for they are evidently so spoken of. "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments.*" That ephod of Aaron signified the same with the seamless coat of Christ, our great High Priest. As Christ's coat had no seam, but was woven from the top throughout, so it was with the ephod. As God took care in His providence that Christ's coat should not be rent, so God took special care that the ephod should not be rent. The golden bells on this ephod, by their precious matter and pleasant sound, do well represent the good profession that the saints

make; and the pomegranates the fruit they bring forth. And as, in the hem of the ephod, bells and pomegranates were constantly connected, as is once and again observed, *there was a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate,* so it is in the true saints. Their good profession and their good fruit do constantly accompany one another. The fruit they bring forth in life evermore answers the pleasant sound of their profession.

As this fruit of Christian practice is evermore found in true saints, according as they have opportunity and trial, so it is found in them only. None but true Christians do live such an obedient life, so universally devoted to their duty, and given up to the business of a Christian. All unsanctified men are workers of iniquity; they are of their father the devil, and the lusts of their father they will do. There is no hypocrite that will go through with the business of religion, and both begin and finish the tour; they will not endure the trials God is wont to bring on the professors of religion, but will turn aside to their crooked ways; they will not be thoroughly faithful to Christ in their practice, and follow Him whithersoever He goes. Whatever lengths they may go in religion in some instances, and though they may appear exceeding strict, and mightily engaged in the service of God for a season, yet they are servants to sin: the chains of their old taskmasters are not broken; their lusts yet have a reigning

power in their hearts; and therefore to these masters they will bow down again.[1]

Many natural men, under the means that are used with them, and God's strivings with them to bring them to forsake their sins, do by their sins as Pharaoh did by his pride and covetousness, which he gratified by keeping the children of Israel in bondage, when God strove with him to bring him to let the people go. When God's hand pressed Pharaoh sore, and he was exercised with fears of God's future wrath, he entertained some thoughts of letting the people go, and promised he would do it; but from time to time he broke his promises, when he saw there was respite. So sinners are sometimes by thunders and lightnings, and great terrors of the law, brought to a seeming work of humiliation, and to appearance to part with their sins; but are no more thoroughly brought to a disposition to dismiss them, than Pharaoh was to let the people go. Pharaoh, in the struggle that was between his

1 "No unregenerate man, though he go ever so far, let him do ever so much, but he lives in some one sin or other, secret or open, little or great. Judas went far, but he was covetous; Herod went far, but he loved his Herodias. Every dog hath his kennel; every swine hath his swill; and every wicked man his lust."—SHEPARD'S *Sincere Convert.*

"There is never an unsound heart in the world, but—as they say of witches, they have some familiar that sucks them, so it—has some lust that is beloved of it, some beloved there is, it has given a promise to never to forsake."—SHEPARD'S *Parable of the Ten Virgins.*

conscience and his lusts, was for contriving that God might be served, and he enjoy his lusts that were gratified by the slavery of the people, too. So many sinners are for contriving to serve God, and enjoy their lusts too. Afterwards Pharaoh consented to let the men go, if they would leave the women and children. And then after that, when God's hand was yet harder upon him, he consented that they should go, even women and children as well as men, provided they would leave their cattle behind. So it oftentimes is with sinners; they are willing to part with some of their sins, but not all; they are brought to part with the more gross acts of sin, but not to part with their lusts in lesser indulgences of them. Whereas we must part with all our sins, little and great; and all that belongs to them, men, women, children, and cattle; they must all be let go, with "*their young and with their old, with their sons and with their daughters, with their flocks and with their herds, there must not be a hoof left behind.*" At last, when it came to extremity, Pharaoh consented to let the people all go, and all that they had; but he was not steadfastly of that mind; he soon repented, and pursued after them again: and the reason was that those lusts of pride and covetousness, that were gratified by Pharaoh's dominion over the people, and the gains of their service, were never really mortified in him, but only violently restrained. And thus, he being guilty of backsliding, after his seeming compliance

with God's commands, was destroyed without remedy. Thus there may be a forced parting with ways of disobedience to the commands of God, that may seem to be universal, as to what appears for a little season; but because it is a mere force, without the mortification of the inward principle of sin, they will not persevere in it; but will return as the dog to his vomit; and so bring on themselves dreadful and remediless destruction. There were many false disciples in Christ's time, that followed Him for a while; but none of them followed Him to the end; but some on one occasion, and some on another, *went back and walked no more with Him.*

From what has been said it is manifest that Christian practice, or a holy life, is a great and distinguishing sign of true and saving grace. But I may go further and assert that it is the chief of all the signs of grace, as an evidence of the sincerity of professors both unto others and also to their own consciences.

I. I shall consider Christian practice and a holy life, as a manifestation and sign of the sincerity of a professing Christian, to the eye of his neighbours and brethren.

And that this is the chief sign of grace in this respect, is very evident from the Word of God. Christ, who knew best how to give us rules to judge of others, has repeated it and inculcated it, that we should *know them by their fruits.* Its fruit is the main and most proper diagnostic by which

one tree is distinguished from another. Christ nowhere says, Ye shall know the tree by its leaves or flowers, or ye shall know men by their talk, or ye shall know them by the good story they tell of their experiences, or ye shall know them by the manner and air of their speaking, and emphasis and pathos of expression, or by their speaking feelingly, or by making a very great show by abundance of talk, or by many tears and affectionate expressions, or by the affections ye feel in your hearts towards them; but *by their fruits shall ye know them, the tree is known by its fruit, every tree is known by its own fruit.*

And, as this is the evidence that Christ has directed us mainly to look at in others, in judging of them, so it is the evidence that Christ has mainly directed us to give to others, whereby they may judge of us. "*Let your light so shine before men, that others seeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in heaven.*" Here Christ directs us to manifest our godliness to others. Godliness is, as it were, a light that shines in the soul; Christ directs that this light not only shine within, but that it shine out before men that they may see it. But which way shall this be? It is by our good works. Christ doth not say that others hearing your good works, your good story, or your pathetical expressions; but "*that others seeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in heaven.*" Doubtless, when Christ gives us a rule how to make our light

shine, that others may have evidence of it, His rule is the best that is to be found. And the apostles do mention a Christian practice, as the principal ground of their esteem of persons as true Christians. As the Apostle Paul. "*God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister.*" So the Apostle John expresses the same, as the ground of his good opinion of Gaius. "*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth. Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church.*" And I would further observe that the Apostle James, expressly comparing that way of showing others our faith and Christianity by our practice or works with other ways of showing our faith without works, or not by works, does plainly and abundantly prefer the former. "*Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith and I have works; show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.*" Now certainly all accounts we give of ourselves in words—our saying that we have faith, and that we are converted, and telling the manner how we came to have faith, and the steps by which it was wrought, and the discoveries and experiences that accompany it — are still but manifesting our faith by what we say; it is but showing our faith by our words; which the apostle speaks of as falling vastly short of mani-

festing of it by what we do, and showing our faith by our works.

And, as the Scripture plainly teaches that practice is the best evidence of the sincerity of professing Christians, so reason teaches the same thing. Reason shows that men's deeds are better and more faithful interpreters of their minds than their words. The common sense of all mankind, through all ages and nations, teaches them to judge of men's hearts chiefly by their practice, in other matters: as, whether a man be a loyal subject, a true lover, a dutiful child, or a faithful servant. If a man professes a great deal of love and friendship to another, reason teaches all men that such a profession is not so great an evidence of his being a real and hearty friend, as his appearing a friend in deeds; being faithful and constant to his friend in prosperity and adversity, ready to lay out himself, and deny himself, and suffer in his personal interest, to do him a kindness.

A wise man will trust to such evidences of the sincerity of friendship further than a thousand earnest professions and solemn declarations and most affectionate expressions of friendship in words. And there is equal reason why practice should also be looked upon as the best evidence of friendship towards Christ. Reason says, the same that Christ said, "*He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.*" Thus, if we see a man who in the course of his

life seems to follow and imitate Christ, and greatly to exert and deny himself for the honour of Christ and to promote His kingdom and interest in the world; reason teaches that this is an evidence of love to Christ, more to be depended on than if a man only says he has love, and tells of the inward experiences he has had of love to Him, what strong love he felt, and how his heart was drawn out in love at such and such a time, when it may be there appears but little imitation of Christ in his behaviour, and he seems backward to do any great matter for Him, or to put himself out of his way for the promoting of His kingdom, but seems to be apt to excuse himself, whenever he is called to deny himself for Christ.

So (to mention no more instances) if a professor of Christianity manifests in his behaviour a pitiful tender spirit towards others in calamity, ready to bear their burdens with them, willing to spend his substance for them, and to suffer many inconveniences in his worldly interest to promote the good of others' souls and bodies; is not this a more credible manifestation of a spirit of love to men, than only a man's telling what love he felt to others at certain times, how he pitied their souls, how his soul was in travail for them, and how he felt a hearty love and pity to his enemies; when in his behaviour he seems to be of a very selfish spirit, close and niggardly, all for himself, and none for his neighbours, and

perhaps envious and contentious? Persons in a pang of affection may think they have a willingness of heart for great things, to do much and to suffer much, and so may profess it very earnestly and confidently, when really their hearts are far from it. Thus many in their affectionate pangs have thought themselves willing to be damned eternally for the glory of God. Passing affections easily produce words; and words are cheap; and godliness is more easily feigned in words than in actions. Christian practice is a costly, laborious thing. The self-denial that is required of Christians, and the narrowness of the way that leads to life, does not consist in words but in practice. Hypocrites may much more easily be brought to talk like saints, than to act like saints.

Thus it is plain that Christian practice is the best sign or manifestation of the true godliness of a professing Christian, to the eye of his neighbours.

But then the following things should be well observed, that this matter may be rightly understood:—

First.—It must be observed that, when the Scripture speaks of Christian practice as the best evidence to others of sincerity and truth of grace, a profession of Christianity is not excluded but supposed. The rules mentioned were rules given to the followers of Christ, to guide them in their thoughts of professing Christians, and those that offered themselves as some of their society,

whereby they might judge of the truth of their pretences, and the sincerity of the profession they made; and not for the trial of heathens, or those that made no pretence to Christianity, and that Christians had nothing to do with. If any man should say plainly that he was not a Christian, and did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, or a Person sent of God, these rules of Christ and His apostles do not at all oblige us to look upon him as a sincere Christian, let his visible practice and virtues be what they will. And not only do these rules take no place with respect to a man that explicitly denies Christianity, and is a professed deist, Jew, heathen, or open infidel; but also with respect to a man that only forbears to make a profession of Christianity; because they were given us only to judge of professing Christians. Fruits must be joined with open flowers; bells and pomegranates go together.

But here will naturally arise the enquiry, when a man may be said to profess Christianity, or what profession may properly be called a profession of Christianity.

I answer in two things.

(1.) In order to a man's being properly said to make a profession of Christianity, there must undoubtedly be a profession of all that is necessary to his being a Christian, or of so much as belongs to the essence of Christianity. Whatsoever is essential in Christianity itself, the profession of that is essential in the profession of Christianity. If we

take only a part of Christianity, and leave out a part that is essential to it, what we take is not Christianity; because something that is of the essence of it is wanting. Thus, in order to a profession of Christianity, we must profess that we believe that Jesus is the Messiah: for this reason, because such a belief is essential to Christianity. And so we must profess, either expressly or implicitly, that Jesus satisfied for our sins, and other essential doctrines of the Gospel, because a belief of these things also is essential to Christianity.

But there are other things as essential to religion as an orthodox belief; which it is therefore as necessary that we should profess, in order to our being truly said to profess Christianity. Thus it is essential to Christianity that we repent of our sins, that we be convinced of our own sinfulness, and that we are sensible we have justly exposed ourselves to God's wrath, and that our hearts do renounce all sin, and that we do with our whole hearts embrace Christ as our only Saviour; and that we love Him above all, and are willing for His sake to forsake all, and that we do give up ourselves to be entirely and for ever His. Such things as these do as much belong to the essence of Christianity, as the belief of any of the doctrines of the Gospel; and therefore the profession of them does as much belong to a Christian profession. Not that, in order to being professing Christians, it is necessary that there should be an

explicit profession of every individual thing that belongs to Christian grace or virtue; but certainly there must be a profession, either express or implicit, of what is of the essence of religion. In order to persons being entitled to full esteem and charity with their neighbours as being sincere professors of Christianity, by the rules of Christ and His apostles, there must be a visibly holy life, with a profession either expressing or plainly implying such things as those which have been now mentioned. We are to *know them by their fruits*, that is, we are by their fruits to know whether they are what they profess to be; not that we are to know by their fruits that they have something in them they do not so much as pretend to.

And moreover,

(2.) That profession of these things which is properly called a Christian profession, and which must be joined with Christian practice, in order to persons being entitled to the benefit of those rules, must be made (as to what appears) understandingly: that is, they must be persons that appear to have been so far instructed in the principles of religion, as to be in an ordinary capacity to understand the proper import of what is expressed in their profession. For sounds are no significations or declarations of anything, any further than men understand the meaning of their own sounds.

But in order to persons making a proper profession of Christianity, such as the Scripture directs

to, and such as the followers of Christ should require, for the acceptance of the professors with full charity as of their society: it is not necessary that they should give an account of the particular steps and method by which the Holy Spirit, sensibly to them, wrought and brought about those great essential things of Christianity in their hearts. There is not the least shadow in the Scripture of any such custom in the Church of God, from Adam to the death of the Apostle John.

I am far from saying that it is not requisite that persons should give any sort of account of their experiences to their brethren. For persons to profess those things wherein the essence of Christianity lies, is the same thing as to profess that they experience those things. Solemnly to profess that, in a sense and full conviction of their own utter sinfulness, misery, and impotence, and totally undone state as in themselves, and their just desert of God's utter rejection and eternal wrath without mercy, and the utter insufficiency of their own righteousness or anything in them to satisfy divine justice or recommend them to God's favour, they do only and entirely depend on the Lord Jesus Christ, and His satisfaction and righteousness; that they repent of their sins, and utterly renounce all sin, and give up themselves wholly to Christ, willingly subjecting themselves to Him as their King; that they give Him their hearts and their whole man, and are willing and resolved to have God for their whole and everlasting portion, and,

in a dependence on His promises of a future and eternal enjoyment of Him in heaven, to renounce all the enjoyments of this vain world, selling all for this great treasure and future inheritance, and to comply with every command of God, even the most difficult and self-denying, and devote their whole lives to God's service; and that, in forgiveness of those that have injured them, and a general benevolence to mankind, their hearts are united to the people of Jesus Christ as their people, to cleave to them and love them as their brethren: I say, for persons solemnly to profess such things as these, as in the presence of God, is the same thing as to profess that they are conscious to, or do experience, such things in their hearts.

Nor do I suppose but that, if a person that is enquired of about particular passages, times, and circumstances of his Christian experience, seems to be able to give a distinct account of the manner of his first conversion, in such a method as has been frequently observable in true conversion, so that things seem sensibly and distinctly to follow one another, in the order of time, according to the order of nature—it is an illustrating circumstance that among other things adds lustre to the evidence he gives his brethren of the truth of his experiences.

But the thing that I speak of as unscriptural is the insisting on a particular account of the distinct method and steps, wherein the Spirit of God did sensibly proceed, in first bringing the soul into a state of salvation, as a thing requisite in order to

receiving a professor into full charity as a real Christian; or, for the want of such relation, to disregard other things in the evidence persons give to their neighbours of their Christianity, that are vastly more important and essential.

Secondly.—That we may rightly understand how Christian practice is the greatest evidence that others can have of the sincerity of a professing Christian, it is needful that what was said before, showing what Christian practice is, should be borne in mind; and that it should be considered how far this may be visible to others. Merely that a professor of Christianity is what is commonly called an honest man, and a moral man (that is, we have no special transgression or iniquity to charge him with that might bring a blot on his character), is no great evidence of the sincerity of his profession. This is not making his *light shine before men.* This is not that *work and labour of love* showed towards Christ's name, which gave the apostle such persuasion of the sincerity of the professing Hebrews.

But there may be great positive appearances of holiness in men's visible behaviour; their life may appear to be a life of the service of God; they may appear to follow the example of Jesus Christ, and come up in a great measure to those excellent rules in the 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters of Matthew, and 12th of Romans, and many other parts of the New Testament; there may be a great appearance of their being universal in their obedience to Christ's

commands and the rules of the Gospel. They may appear to be universal in the performance of the duties of the first table, manifesting the fear and love of God; and also universal in fulfilling rules of love to men, love to saints, and love to enemies; rules of meekness and forgiveness, rules of mercy and charity, and looking not only at their own things but also at the things of others; rules of doing good to men's souls and bodies, to particular persons and to the public; rules of temperance and mortification, and of a humble conversation; rules of bridling the tongue, and improving it to glorify God and bless men, showing that in their tongues is the law of kindness. They may appear to walk as Christians, in all places, and at all seasons, in the house of God, and in their families, and among their neighbours, on Sabbath-days, and every day, in business and in conversation, towards friends and enemies, towards superiors, inferiors, and equals. There may be great appearances in a man's walk of a disposition to forsake anything rather than to forsake Christ, and to make everything give place to His honour. There may be great manifestations in a man's behaviour of such religion as this being his element, and of his placing the delight and happiness of his life in it; and his conversation may be such that he may carry with him a sweet odour of Christian graces and heavenly dispositions wherever he goes. And when it is thus in the professors of Christianity, here is an evidence to others of their sincerity in

their profession, to which all other manifestations are not worthy to be compared.

There is doubtless a great variety in the degrees of evidence that professors do exhibit of their sincerity, in their life and practice: as there is a variety in the fairness and clearness of accounts persons give of the manner and method of their experiences. But undoubtedly such a manifestation as has been described, of a Christian spirit in practice, is vastly beyond the fairest and brightest story of particular steps and passages of experience that ever was told.

But yet,

Thirdly.—It must be noted, agreeable to what was formerly observed, that no external manifestations and outward appearances whatsoever, that are visible to the world, are infallible evidences of grace. These manifestations that have been mentioned are the best that mankind can have; and they are such as do oblige Christians entirely to embrace professors as saints, and love them and rejoice in them as the children of God, and are sufficient to give them as great satisfaction concerning them as ever is needful to guide them in their conduct, or for any intent and purpose that needs to be answered in this world. But nothing that appears to them in their neighbour can be sufficient to beget an absolute certainty concerning the state of his soul; for they see not his heart, nor can they see all his external behaviour, for much of it is in secret and hid from the eye of the

world. And it is impossible certainly to determine how far a man may go in many external appearances and imitations of grace, from other principles. Though undoubtedly, if others could see so much of what belongs to men's practice as their own consciences may see of it, it might be an infallible evidence of their state, as will appear from what follows.

Having thus considered Christian practice as the best evidence of the sincerity of professors to others, I now proceed,

II. To observe that the Scripture also speaks of Christian practice as a distinguishing and sure evidence of grace to persons' own consciences. This is very plain. "*Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*"

But, for the greater clearness in this matter, I would first show how Christian practice, doing good works or keeping Christ's commandments, is to be taken, when the Scripture represents it as a sure sign to our own consciences that we are real Christians. And, secondly, I will prove that this is the chief of all evidences that men can have of their own sincere godliness.

First, I would show how Christian practice, or keeping Christ's commandments, is to be taken, when the Scripture represents it as a sure evidence to our own consciences that we are sincere Christians.

And here I would observe that we cannot reasonably suppose that, when the Scripture in

this case speaks of good works, good fruit, and keeping Christ's commandments, it has respect merely to what is external, or the motion and action of the body, without including anything else, having no respect to any aim or intention of the agent or any act of his understanding or will. For consider men's actions so, and they are no more good works or acts of obedience than the regular motions of a clock; nor are they considered as the actions of the men, or any human actions at all. The actions of the body, taken thus, are neither acts of obedience nor disobedience, any more than the motions of the body in a convulsion. But the obedience and fruit that is spoken of is the obedience and fruit of the man; and therefore not only the acts of the body but the obedience of the soul, consisting in the acts and practice of the soul.

Not that I suppose that, when the Scripture speaks in this case of gracious works and fruit and practice, in these expressions is included all inward piety and holiness of heart, both principle and exercise, both spirit and practice: because then, in these things being given as signs of a gracious principle in the heart, the same thing would be given as a sign of itself, and there would be no distinction between root and fruit. But only the gracious exercise and holy act of the soul is meant, and given as the sign of the holy principle and good estate. Neither is every kind of inward exercise of grace meant; but the practical exercise,

that exercise of the soul and exertion of inward holiness, which there is in an obediential act; or that exertion of the mind and act of grace, which issues and terminates in what they call the imperate acts of the will; in which something is directed and commanded by the soul to be done, and brought to pass in practice.

Such effective exercises of grace as these, many of the martyrs have experienced in a high degree. And all true saints live a life of such acts of grace; as they all live a life of gracious works, of which these operative exertions of grace are the life and soul. And this is the obedience and fruit that God mainly looks at, as He looks at the soul more than the body; as much as the soul, in the constitution of the human nature, is the superior part. As God looks at the obedience and practice of the man, he looks at the practice of the soul; for the soul is the man in God's sight. "*For the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for he looketh on the heart.*"

And thus it is that obedience, good works, good fruits are to be taken, when given in Scripture as a sure evidence to our own consciences of a true principle of grace; even as including the obedience and practice of the soul, as preceding and governing the actions of the body. When practice is given in Scripture as the main evidence of our true Christianity to others, then is meant that in our practice which is visible to them, even our outward actions; but when practice is given as a sure evidence of our real Christianity to our own

consciences, then is meant that in our practice which is visible to our own consciences; which is not only the motion of our bodies, but the exertion and exercise of the soul, which directs and commands that motion; which is more directly and immediately under the view of our own consciences than the act of the body. And that this is the intent of the Scripture, not only does the nature and reason of the thing show, but it is plain by the Scripture itself.

Thus it is evident that, when Christ, at the conclusion of His Sermon on the Mount, speaks of doing or practising those sayings of His as the grand sign of professors being true disciples, without which He likens them to *a man that built his house upon the sand*, and with which to *a man that built his house upon a rock*, He has a respect, not only to the outward behaviour, but to the inward exercise of the mind in that behaviour: as is apparent by observing what those preceding sayings of His are that He refers to. We shall find they are such as these: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the meek; blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; blessed are the merciful; blessed are the pure in heart; whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause; whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her; love your enemies; take no thought for your life,*" and others of the like nature, which imply inward exercises.

Though, in this great evidence of sincerity that

the Scripture gives us, what is inward is of greatest importance, yet what is outward is included and intended, as connected with the practical exertion of grace in the will, directing and commanding the actions of the body. And hereby are effectually cut off all pretensions that any man can have to evidences of godliness, who externally lives wickedly; because the great evidence lies in that inward exercise and practice of the soul, which consists in the act of the will commanding outward acts. But it is known that these commanding acts of the will are not one way, and the actions of the bodily organs another; for the unalterable law of nature is that they should be united, as long as soul and body are united, and the organs are not so destroyed as to be incapable of those motions that the soul commands. Thus it would be ridiculous for a man to plead that the commanding act of his will was to go to the public worship, while his feet carry him to a tavern; or that the commanding act of his will was to give such a piece of money as he had in his hand to a poor beggar, while his hand at the same instant kept it back and held it fast.

Secondly, I proceed to show that Christian practice, taken in the sense that has been explained, is the chief of all the evidences of a saving sincerity in religion, to the consciences of the professors of it; much to be preferred to the method of the first convictions, enlightenings, and comforts in conversion, or any immanent discoveries

or exercises of grace whatsoever, that begin and end in contemplation.[1]

The First Argument.—Reason plainly shows that those things which put it to the proof what men will actually cleave to and prefer in their practice, when left to follow their own choice and inclinations, are the proper trial what they do really prefer in their hearts. Sincerity in religion, as has been observed already, consists in setting God highest in the heart, in choosing Him before other things, in having a heart to sell all for Christ. But a man's actions are the proper trial what a man's heart prefers. As, for instance, when it is so that God and other things come to stand in competition, God is as it were set before a man on one hand, and his worldly interest or pleasure on the other (as it often is so in the course of a man's life), his behaviour in such case, in actually cleaving to the one and forsaking the other, is the proper trial which he prefers. Sincerity consists in forsaking all for Christ in heart; but to forsake all for Christ in heart is the very same thing as to have an heart to forsake all for Christ: but certainly

[1] "Look upon John, Christ's beloved disciple and bosom companion; he had received the anointing to know him that is true, and he knew that he knew him, 1 John ii. 3. But how did he know that? He might be deceived (as it is strange to see what a melancholy fancy will do, and the effects of it; as honest men are reputed to have weak brains, and never saw the depths of the secrets of God); what is his last proof? 'because we keep his commandments.'"—SHEPARD's *Parable of the Ten Virgins*

the proper trial whether a man has an heart to forsake all for Christ is his being actually put to it, the having Christ and other things coming in competition, that he must actually or practically cleave to one and forsake the other.

To follow Christ in heart is to have an heart to follow Him. To deny ourselves in heart for Christ is the same thing as to have an heart to deny ourselves for Him in fact. The main and most proper proof of a man's having an heart to anything, concerning which he is at liberty to follow his own inclinations, and either to do or not to do as he pleases, is his doing of it. When a man is at liberty either to speak or keep silence, the most proper evidence of his having an heart to speak is his speaking. When a man is at liberty either to walk or sit still, the proper proof of his having an heart to walk is his walking. Godliness consists not in an heart to intend to do the will of God, but in an heart to do it.

It is therefore exceeding absurd, and even ridiculous, for any to pretend that they have a good heart, while they live a wicked life or do not bring forth the fruit of universal holiness in their practice. For it is proved in fact that such men do not love God above all. It is foolish to dispute against plain fact and experience. Men that live in ways of sin, and yet flatter themselves that they shall go to heaven, or expect to be received hereafter as holy persons without a holy life and practice, act as though they expected to make a fool of their

Judge. Which is implied in what the apostle says, "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.*" As much as to say, "Do not deceive yourselves with an expectation of reaping life everlasting hereafter, if you do not sow to the Spirit here; it is in vain to think that God will be made a fool of by you, that He will be shammed and baffled with shadows instead of substance, and with vain pretences instead of that good fruit which He expects, when the contrary to what you pretend appears plainly in your life before His face." The great Judge, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, will not be mocked or baffled with any pretences, without a holy life. If in His name men have *prophesied and wrought miracles*, and have *had faith so that they could remove mountains and cast out devils*, and however high their religious affections have been, however great resemblances they have had of grace, and though their hiding-place has been so dark and deep that no human skill nor search could find them out; yet, if they are workers or practisers of iniquity, they cannot hide their hypocrisy from their Judge. "*There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.*"

Would a wise prince suffer himself to be fooled and baffled by a subject, who should pretend that he was a loyal subject, and should tell his prince that he had an entire affection to him, and that at such and such a time he had experience of it and

felt his affections strongly working towards him, and should come expecting to be accepted and rewarded by his prince, as one of his best friends on that account, though he lived in rebellion against him, following some pretender to his crown, and from time to time stirring up sedition against him? Or would a master suffer himself to be shammed and gulled by a servant, that should pretend to great experiences of love and honour towards him in his heart, and a great sense of his worthiness and kindness to him, when at the same time he refused to obey him, and he could get no service done by him?

The Second Argument. — As reason shows that those things which occur in the course of life, which put it to the proof whether men will prefer God to other things in practice, are the proper trial of the uprightness and sincerity of their hearts; so the same are represented as the proper trial of the sincerity of professors in the Scripture. There we find that such things are called by that very name, *trials* or *temptations*. The things that put it to the proof whether men will prefer God to other things in practice, are the difficulties of religion, or those things which occur that make the practice of duty difficult and cross to other principles besides the love of God; because in them God and other things are both set before men together, for their actual and practical choice; and it comes to this, that we cannot hold to both, but one or the other must be forsaken. These

things are all over the Scripture called by the name of trials or proofs. And they are called by this name because they are the proper proofs in which it is truly determined by experience, whether men have a thorough disposition of heart to cleave to God or no.

If we put true gold into the furnace, we shall find its great value and preciousness; so the truth and inestimable value of the virtues of a true Christian appear when under these trials. Pure gold will come out of the furnace in full weight: so true saints when tried *come forth as gold.* Christ distinguishes true grace from counterfeit by this, that it is *gold tried in the fire.* So that it is evident that these things are called trials in Scripture principally as they try or prove the sincerity of professors. They are eminently what they are called by the Holy Ghost; God gives things their name from that which is eminently their nature. And if it be so that these things are the proper and eminent trial, proof, or experiment of the sincerity of professors; then certainly the result of the trial or experiment (that is, persons' behaviour or practice under such trials), is the proper and eminent evidence of their sincerity; for they are called trials or proofs only with regard to the result, and because the effect is eminently the proof or evidence. And this is the most proper proof and evidence to the conscience of those that are the subjects of these trials. For, when God is said by these things to try men and prove them, to *see what*

is in their hearts and whether they will keep His commandments or no, we are not to understand that it is for His own information, or that He may obtain evidence Himself of their sincerity (for He needs no trials for His information); but chiefly for their conviction, and to exhibit evidence to their consciences.

We find that Christ, from time to time, took this method to convince the consciences of those that pretended friendship to Him, and to show them what they were. This was the method He took with the rich young man. He seemed to show great respect to Christ; he *came kneeling* to Him, and called Him *Good Master,* and made a great profession of obedience to the commandments; but Christ tried him by bidding him *go and sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and come and take up his cross and follow Him;* telling him, that then he should have *treasure in heaven.* So He tried another that we read of. He made a great profession of respect to Christ; says he, "*Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*" Christ immediately puts his friendship to the proof, by telling him, that *the foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head.* And thus Christ is wont still to try professed disciples in general, in His providence. So the seed sown in every kind of ground, *stony ground, thorny ground,* and *good ground,* which in all appears alike when it first springs up, yet is tried, and the difference made to appear, by the burning heat of the sun.

Seeing, therefore, that these are the things that God makes use of to try us, it is undoubtedly the surest way for us to pass a right judgment on ourselves, to try ourselves by the same things. These trials of His are not for His information, but for ours; therefore we ought to receive our information from thence. The surest way to know our gold, is to look upon it and examine it in God's furnace, where He tries it for that end that we may see what it is. If we have a mind to know whether a building stands strong or no, we must look upon it when the wind blows. If we would know whether that which appears in the form of wheat has the real substance of wheat or is only chaff, we must observe it when it is winnowed. If we would know whether a staff is strong or a rotten broken reed, we must observe it when it is leaned on and weight is borne upon it. If we would weigh ourselves justly, we must weigh ourselves in God's scales that He makes use of to weigh us.

When a man is brought to the dividing of paths, the one of which leads to Christ, and the other to the objects of his lusts, to see which way he will go; or is brought and, as it were, set between Christ and the world, Christ on the right hand and the world on the left, so that, if he goes to one, he must leave the other, to see which his heart inclines most to, or which preponderates in his heart; this is just the same thing as laying Christ and the world in two opposite scales: and his going to the one, and leaving the other, is just

the same thing as the sinking of one scale, and rising of the other. A man's practice, therefore, under the trials of God's providence, is as much the proper experiment and evidence of the superior inclination of his heart, as the motion of the balance, with different weights in opposite scales, is the proper experiment of the superior weight.

The Third Argument.—Another argument that holy practice, in the sense which has been explained, is the highest kind of evidence of the truth of grace to the consciences of Christians, is that in practice grace, in Scripture style, is said to be *made perfect* or to be *finished.* "*By works was faith made perfect.*" "*Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.*" The commandment of Christ, which the apostle has especial respect to when he here speaks of our keeping His commandments, is (as I observed before) that great commandment of His which respects deeds of love to our brethren, as appears by the following verses. Grace is said to be perfected or finished in holy practice, as therein it is brought to its proper effect and to that exercise which is the end of the principle; the tendency and design of grace is reached, and its operation completed and crowned. As the tree is made perfect in the fruit; it is not perfected in the seed's being planted in the ground; it is not perfected in the first quickening of the seed, and in its putting forth root and sprout; nor is it perfected when it comes up out of the ground; nor is it perfected in bringing forth leaves; nor

yet in putting forth blossoms: but, when it has brought forth good ripe fruit, then it is perfected, therein it reaches its end, the design of the tree is finished; all that belongs to the tree is completed and brought to its proper effect in the fruit. So is grace in its practical exercises. Grace is said to be made perfect or finished in its work or fruit, in the same manner as it is said of sin. "*When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*" Here are three steps: first, sin in its principle or habit, in the being of lust in the heart; and, nextly, here is its conceiving, consisting in the immanent exercises of it in the mind; and, lastly, here is the fruit that was conceived actually, brought forth in the wicked work and practice. And this the apostle calls the finishing or perfecting of sin; for the word, in the original, is the same that is translated *perfected* in those forementioned places.

The Fourth Argument.—Another thing which makes it evident that holy practice is the principal evidence that we ought to make use of in judging both of our own and others' sincerity is, that this evidence is above all others insisted on in Scripture. A common acquaintance with the Scripture, together with a little attention and observation, will be sufficient to show to anyone that this is ten times more insisted on as a note of true piety throughout the Scripture, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, than anything

else. And, in the New Testament, where Christ and His apostles do expressly and of declared purpose lay down signs of true godliness, this is almost wholly insisted on. *"By this you shall know that you know God; By this are manifest the children of God and the children of the devil; He that hath this builds on a good foundation, he that hath it not builds on the sand; Hereby we shall assure our hearts; He is the man that loveth Christ."*

Really there is no place in the New Testament where the declared design is to give signs of godliness, but that holy practice, and keeping Christ's commandments, is the mark chosen out from all others to be insisted on. Which is an invincible argument that it is the chief of all the evidences of godliness; unless we suppose that, when Christ and His apostles on design set themselves about this business of giving signs, by which professing Christians in all ages might determine their state, they did not know how to choose signs so well as we could have chosen for them. But, if we make the Word of Christ our rule, then undoubtedly those marks which Christ and His apostles did chiefly lay down and give to us that we might try ourselves by them, those same marks we ought especially to receive, and chiefly to make use of, in the trial of ourselves. And surely those things which Christ and His apostles chiefly insisted on in the rules they gave, ministers ought chiefly to insist on in the rules they give.

To insist much on those things that the Scripture

insists little on, and to insist very little on those things on which the Scripture insists much, is a dangerous thing; because it is going out of God's way, and is to judge ourselves and guide others in an unscriptural manner. God knew which way of leading and guiding souls was safest and best for them; He insisted so much on some things, because he knew it to be needful that they should be insisted on; and let other things more alone as a wise God, because He knew it was not best for us so much to lay the weight of the trial there. As the Sabbath was made for man, so the Scriptures were made for man; and they are by Infinite Wisdom fitted for our use and benefit. We should, therefore, make them our guide in all things, in our thoughts of religion and of ourselves. And for us to make that great which the Scripture makes little, and that little which the Scripture makes great, tends to give us a monstrous idea of religion; and (at least indirectly and gradually) to lead us wholly away from the right rule, and from a right opinion of ourselves, and to establish delusion and hypocrisy.

The Fifth Argument.—Christian practice is plainly spoken of in the Word of God as the main evidence of the truth of grace, not only to others, but to men's own consciences. It is not only more spoken of and insisted on than other signs, but, in many places where it is spoken of, it is represented as the chief of all evidences. This is plain in the manner of expression from time to time. If God were now

to speak from heaven to resolve our doubts concerning signs of godliness, and should give some particular sign, that by it all might know whether they were sincerely godly or not, with such emphatical expressions as these, "That is the man that is a true saint, that is the very man, by this you may know, this is the thing by which it is manifest who are saints and who are sinners, such men as these are saints indeed"; should not we look upon it as a thing beyond doubt, that this was given as a special and eminently distinguishing note of true godliness? But this is the very case with respect to the sign of grace I am speaking of. God has again and again uttered Himself in His Word in this very manner, concerning Christian practice. "*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.*" Not only the emphasis with which Christ utters Himself is remarkable, but also His so much insisting on and repeating the matter, as He does in the context. "*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*" "*If a man love me, he will keep my words.*" "*He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.*" "*Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it.*" "*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples.*" "*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*"

We have the like emphatical expressions used about the same thing in the Old Testament. "*And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord,*

that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." "Come, ye children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile; depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments." "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil."

The Sixth Argument.—Another thing which makes it evident that holy practice is the chief of all the signs of the sincerity of professors, not only to the world, but to their own consciences, is, that this is the grand evidence which will hereafter be made use of before the judgment-seat of God; according to which His judgment will be regulated, and the state of every professor of religion unalterably determined. God's future judging of men, in order to their eternal retribution, will not be His trying, and finding out, and passing a judgment upon the state of men's hearts, in His own mind; but it will be a declarative judgment; and the end of it will be not God's forming a judgment within Himself, but the manifestation of His judgment and the righteousness of it to men's own consciences and to the world. Therefore the Day of Judgment is called *the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* And the end of God's future trial and judgment of men will be especially the clear manifestation of God's righteous judgment, with respect to each, to his conscience. And though

God needs no medium whereby to make the truth evident to Himself, yet evidences will be made use of in His future judging of men. Now, doubtless the evidences that will be made use of in their trial, will be such as will be best fitted to serve the ends of the judgment—the manifestation of the righteous judgment of God, not only to the world, but to men's own consciences.

But the Scriptures do abundantly teach us that the grand evidences which the Judge will make use of in the trial, for these ends, according to which the judgment of every one shall be regulated and the irreversible sentence passed, will be men's works. Men's practice is the only evidence that Christ represents the future judgment as regulated by, in that most particular description of the Day of Judgment which we have in the Holy Bible in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. The Judge will not go about to examine men as to the method of their experiences, or set every man to tell his story of the manner of his conversion; but his works will be brought forth, what he has done in darkness and in light. At the Day of Judgment God will weigh professors in a balance that is visible. And the balance will be the same that he weighs men in now, which has been already described.

Hence we may undoubtedly infer that men's works (taken in the sense that has been explained) are the highest evidences by which they ought to try themselves. Certainly that which our supreme Judge will chiefly make use of to judge us by, when

we come to stand before Him, we should chiefly make use of to judge ourselves by. If it had not been revealed in what manner and by what evidence the Judge would proceed with us hereafter, how natural would it be for one to say: "Oh that I knew what token God will chiefly look for and insist upon in the last and decisive judgment, which He expects that all should be able to produce who would then be accepted of Him, and according to which sentence shall be passed; that I might know what token or evidence especially to look at and seek after now, as I would be sure not to fail then!" And seeing God has so plainly and abundantly revealed what this token or evidence is, surely, if we act wisely, we shall regard it as of the greatest importance.

Now from all that has been said, I think it to be abundantly manifest that Christian practice is the most proper evidence of the gracious sincerity of professors, to themselves and others; and the chief of all the marks of grace, the sign of signs, and evidence of evidences, that which seals and crowns all other signs. I had rather have the testimony of my conscience, that I have such a saying of my supreme Judge on my side as that, "*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me,*" than the judgment and fullest approbation of all wise, sound, and experienced divines, that have lived this thousand years, on the most exact and

critical examination of my experiences as to the manner of my conversion.

Christian practice is the sign of signs, in this sense that it is the great evidence which confirms and crowns all other signs of godliness. There is no one grace of the Spirit of God, but that Christian practice is the most proper evidence of the truth of it. As it is with the members of our bodies, and all our utensils, the proper proof of the soundness and goodness of them is in the use of them; so it is with our graces—which are given to be used in practice, as much as our hands and feet, or the tools with which we work, or the arms with which we fight—the proper trial and proof of them is in their exercise in practice. Most of the things we use are serviceable to us, and have their serviceableness proved in some pressure, straining, agitation, or collision. So it is with a bow, a sword, an axe, a saw, a cork, a chain, a staff, a foot, a tooth. And they that are so weak as not to bear the strain or pressure we need to put them to, are good for nothing. So it is with all the virtues of the mind. The proper trial and proof of them is in being exercised under those temptations and trials that God brings us under, in the course of His providence, and in being put to such service as strains hard upon the principles of nature.

Holy practice is the proper evidence of repentance. When the Jews professed repentance, when they came confessing their sins to John, he

directed them to the right way of getting and exhibiting proper evidences of the truth of their repentance, when he said to them, "*Bring forth fruits meet for repentance.*"

Holy practice is the proper evidence of a saving faith. It is evident that the Apostle James speaks of works as what does eminently justify faith, or (which is the same thing) justify the professors of faith, and vindicate and manifest the sincerity of their profession. And he speaks of the practical and working nature of faith as the very life and soul of it; in the same manner that the active nature and substance, which is in the body of a man, is the life and soul of that.

Practice is the most proper evidence of a true coming to Christ, and accepting of and closing with Him. A true and saving coming to Christ is, as Christ often teaches, a coming so as to forsake all for Him. But the evidence of having a heart actually to forsake all is, indeed, actually to forsake all so far as called to it. If a prince make suit to a woman in a far country, that she should forsake her own people and father's house and come to him to be his bride, the proper evidence of the compliance of her heart with the king's suit is her actually forsaking her own people and father's house and coming to him. By this her compliance with the king's suit is *made perfect*, in the same sense that the apostle says, "*By works is faith made perfect.*" Christ promises us eternal life, on condition of our coming to Him;

but it is such a coming as He directed the young man to, who came to enquire what he should do that he might have eternal life; Christ bade him *go and sell all that he had*, and come to Him, and follow Him. If he had consented in his heart to the proposal, and had therein come to Christ in his heart, the proper evidence of it would have been his doing of it; and therein his coming to Christ would have been made perfect. When Christ called Levi the publican, sitting at the receipt of custom and in the midst of his worldly gains, the closing of Levi's heart with this invitation of his Saviour to come to Him was manifested and made perfect by his actually rising up, leaving all, and following Him. Christ and other things are set before us together, for us practically to cleave to one and forsake the other. In such a case, a practical cleaving to Christ is a practical acceptance of Christ; as much as a beggar's reaching out his hand and taking a gift that is offered is his practical acceptance of the gift.

Practice is the most proper evidence of trusting in Christ for salvation. The proper signification of the word *trust*, both in common speech and in the Holy Scriptures, is the emboldening and encouragement of a person's mind to run some venture in practice, or in something that he does on the credit of another's sufficiency and faithfulness. And, therefore, the proper evidence of his trusting is the venture he runs in what he does.

Thus Abraham by faith forsook his own country, in a reliance on the covenant of grace God established with him. Thus "*Moses by faith refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God.*" So by faith others "*endured the trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonments.*"

If a man should have word brought him from the king of a distant island that he intended to make him his heir; if, upon receiving the tidings, he immediately leaves his native land and friends and all that he has in the world, to go to that country, in a dependence on what he hears; then he may be said to venture himself and all that he has in the world upon it. But, if he only sits still and hopes for the promised benefit, inwardly pleasing himself with the thoughts of it, he cannot properly be said to venture himself upon it; he runs no venture in the case; he does nothing by which he would be exposed to any suffering in case all should fail. So he that, on the credit of what he hears of a future world, and in a dependence on the report of the Gospel concerning life and immortality, forsakes all, or does so at least so far as there is occasion, making everything entirely give place to his eternal interest; he, and he only, may properly be said to venture himself on the report of the Gospel. And this is the proper evidence of a true trust in Christ for salvation.

So practice is the proper evidence of true

thankfulness. *"What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?"* *Paying our vows* unto God, and *ordering our conversation aright,* seem to be spoken of as the proper expression and evidence of true thankfulness.

So the proper evidence of gracious desires and longings, and that which distinguishes them from those that are false and vain, is that they are not idle wishes and wouldings, like Balaam's, but effectual in practice to stir up persons earnestly and thoroughly to seek the things they long for. *"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after."* *"My soul followeth hard after thee."* *"Draw me, I will run after thee."*

Practice is the proper evidence of a gracious hope. *"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure."* Patient continuance in well-doing, through the difficulties and trials of the Christian course, is often mentioned as the proper expression and fruit of a Christian hope. *"Lord, I have hoped in thy salvation, and done thy commandments."*

Practice, also, is the proper evidence of Christian fortitude. The trial of a good soldier is not in his chimney-corner, but in the field of battle.

And, as the fruit of holy practice is the chief evidence of the truth of grace, so the degree in which experiences have influence on a person's practice is the surest evidence of the degree of that which is spiritual and divine in his experiences. Whatever pretences persons may make to great

discoveries, great love and joys, they are no further to be regarded than they have influence on their practice.

Thus I have endeavoured to represent the evidence there is that Christian practice is the chief of all the signs of saving grace. And, before I conclude this discourse, I would say something briefly in answer to two objections, that may possibly be made by some against what has been said upon this head.

The First Objection.—Some may be ready to say: This seems to be contrary to that opinion so much received among good people, that professors should judge of their state chiefly by their inward experience, and that spiritual experiences are the main evidences of true grace.

I answer: It is, doubtless, a true opinion, and justly much received among good people, that professors should chiefly judge of their state by their experience. But it is a great mistake that what has been said is at all contrary to that opinion. The chief sign of grace to the consciences of Christians being Christian practice, in the sense that has been explained, is not at all inconsistent with Christian experience being the chief evidence of grace. The main thing in this holy practice is the holy acts of the mind, directing and governing the motions of the body. And the motions of the body are to be looked upon as belonging to Christian practice only secondarily, and as they are dependent

and consequent on the acts of the soul. But these inward exercises are not the less a part of Christian experience because they have outward behaviour immediately connected with them. A strong act of love to God is not the less a part of spiritual experience, because it is the act that immediately produces and effects some self-denying and expensive outward action, which is much to the honour and glory of God.

To speak of Christian experience and practice, as if they were two things entirely distinct, is to make a distinction without consideration or reason. Indeed, all Christian experience is not properly called practice, but all Christian practice is properly experience. And the distinction that is made between them is not only an unreasonable but an unscriptural distinction. Holy practice is one kind or part of Christian experience; and both reason and Scripture represent it as the chief, and most important, and most distinguishing part of it.

Such experiences the Apostle Paul mainly insists upon, when he speaks of his experiences in his Epistles. *"We believe, and therefore speak." "The love of Christ constraineth us." "In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the power of God." "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life, which I now live in the*

flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." "*Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you.*" And such experiences as these they were, that this blessed apostle chiefly comforted himself in the consideration of when he was going to martyrdom. "*For I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.*"

And not only does the most important and distinguishing part of Christian experience lie in spiritual practice; but such is the nature of that sort of exercises of grace wherein spiritual practice consists, that nothing is so properly called by the name of experimental religion. This is properly Christian experience wherein the saints have opportunity to see, by actual trial, whether they have a heart to do the will of God and to forsake other things for Christ, or no. As that is called experimental philosophy which brings opinions and notions to the test of fact, so is that properly called experimental religion which brings religious affections and intentions to the like test.

There is a sort of external religious practice wherein is no inward experience, which no account is made of in the sight of God, but it is esteemed good for nothing. And there is what is called experience that is without practice, being neither accompanied nor followed with a Christian behaviour; and this is worse than nothing. Many persons seem to have very wrong notions of

Christian experience and spiritual light and discoveries. Religion consists much in holy affection; but those exercises of affection which are most distinguishing of true religion are these practical exercises. Friendship between earthly friends consists much in affection; but yet those strong exercises of affection, that actually carry them through fire and water for each other, are the highest evidences of true friendship.

The *witness* or *seal* of the Spirit doubtless consists in the effect of the Spirit of God in the heart, in the implantation and exercises of grace there, and so consists in experience. And it is also beyond doubt, that this seal of the Spirit is the highest kind of evidence of the saints' adoption that ever they obtain. But in these exercises of grace in practice, God gives witness and sets to His seal in the most conspicuous, eminent, and evident manner. It has been abundantly found to be true in fact, by the experience of the Christian Church, that Christ commonly gives by His Spirit the greatest and most joyful evidences to His saints of their sonship, in those effectual exercises of grace under trials, which have been spoken of; as is manifest in the full assurance and unspeakable joys of many of the martyrs. Agreeable to that: "*If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.*" And that: "*We rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and glory in tribulations.*"

The Second Objection.—Some also may be ready to

object against what has been said of Christian practice being the chief evidence of the truth of grace, that this is a legal doctrine; and that this making practice a thing of such great importance in religion magnifies works, and tends to lead men to make too much of their own doings, to the diminution of the glory of free grace, and does not seem well to consist with that great Gospel doctrine of justification by faith alone.

But this objection is altogether without reason. Which way is it inconsistent with the freeness of God's grace that holy practice should be a sign of God's grace? It is our works being the price of God's favour, and not their being the sign of it, that is the thing which is inconsistent with the freeness of that favour. Surely the beggar's looking on the money he has in his hands as a sign of the kindness of him who gave it to him, is in no respect inconsistent with the freeness of that kindness. It is his having money in his hands as the price of a benefit, that is the thing which is inconsistent with the free kindness of the giver. The notion of the freeness of the grace of God to sinners, as that is revealed and taught in the Gospel, is not that no holy and amiable qualifications or actions in us shall be a fruit, and so a sign of that grace; but that it is not the worthiness or loveliness of any qualification or action of ours which recommends us to that grace; that kindness is shown to the unworthy and unlovely; that there is great excellency in the benefit bestowed, and no

excellency in the subject as the price of it; that goodness goes forth and flows out from the fulness of God's nature, the fulness of the Fountain of good, without any amiableness in the object to draw it.

If the doctrines of free grace, and justification by faith alone, be inconsistent with the importance of holy practice as a sign of grace, then they are equally inconsistent with the importance of anything whatsoever in us as a sign of grace, any holiness, or any grace that is in us, or any of our experiences or religion. For it is as contrary to the doctrines of free grace and justification by faith alone, that any of these should be the righteousness which we are justified by, as that holy practice should be so. It is with holy works as it is with holy qualifications: it is inconsistent with the freeness of Gospel grace that a title to salvation should be given to men for the loveliness of any of their holy qualifications, as much as that it should be given for the holiness of their works. It is inconsistent with the Gospel doctrine of free grace that an interest in Christ and His benefits should be given for the loveliness of a man's true holiness, for the amiableness of his renewed, sanctified, heavenly heart, his love to God and being like God, or his experience of joy in the Holy Ghost, self-emptiness, a spirit to exalt Christ above all, and to give all glory to Him, and a heart devoted unto Him; I say, it is inconsistent with the Gospel doctrine of free grace that a title to

Christ's benefits should be given out of regard to the loveliness of any of these, or that any of these should be our righteousness in the affair of justification. And yet this does not hinder the importance of these things as evidences of an interest in Christ.

Therefore if it be not legal, and contrary to the evangelical doctrine of justification without works, to insist on any of these as of great importance, as evidence of an interest in Christ; then no more is it thus, to insist on the importance of holy practice. It would be legal to suppose that holy practice justifies by bringing us to a title to Christ's benefits as the price of it, or as recommending to it by its preciousness or excellence; but it is not legal to suppose that holy practice justifies the sincerity of a believer, as the proper evidence of it. The Spirit that indited the Scripture did not think the great importance and absolute necessity of holy practice to be inconsistent with the freeness of grace; for He commonly teaches them both together. God says, "*I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely*"; and then adds in the very next words, "*he that overcometh shall inherit all things*"; as though behaving well in the Christian race and warfare were the condition of the promise. And in that great invitation, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,*" Christ adds in the next words, "*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart;*

and ye shall find rest unto your souls"; as though taking the burden of Christ's service, and imitating His example, were necessary in order to the promised rest. So that the freeness of grace and the necessity of holy practice, which are thus from time to time joined together in Scripture, are not inconsistent one with another. Nor does it at all diminish the honour and importance of faith, that the exercises and effects of faith in practice should be esteemed the chief signs of it; any more than it lessens the importance of life, that action and motion are esteemed the chief signs of that.

So that in what has been said of the importance of holy practice, as the main sign of sincerity, there is nothing legal; nothing derogatory to the freedom and sovereignty of Gospel grace; nothing in the least clashing with the Gospel doctrine of justification by faith alone without the works of the law; nothing in the least tending to lessen the glory of the Mediator and our dependence on His righteousness; nothing infringing on the special prerogatives of faith in the affair of our salvation; nothing in any wise detracting from the glory of God and His mercy, or exalting man, or diminishing his dependence and obligation. If any are against such an importance of holy practice as has been spoken of, it must be only from a senseless aversion to the letters and sound of the word *works*; when there is no reason in the world to be given for it, but what may be given with equal force, why they should have an aversion to

the words *holiness, godliness, grace, religion, experience,* and even *faith* itself. For to make a righteousness of any of these is as legal, and as inconsistent with the way of the new covenant, as to make a righteousness of holy practice.

Our wisdom and discerning with regard to the hearts of men is not much to be trusted. We can see but a little way into the nature of the soul and the depths of man's heart. The ways are so many whereby a person's affections may be moved without any supernatural influence, the natural springs of the affections are so various and so secret, so many things have oftentimes a joint influence on the affections—the imagination (and that in ways innumerable and unsearchable), natural temper, education, the common influences of the Spirit of God, a surprising concourse of affecting circumstances, an extraordinary coincidence of things in the course of men's thoughts, together with the subtle management of invisible malicious spirits—that no philosophy or experience will ever be sufficient to guide us safely through this labyrinth and maze, without our closely following the clue which God has given us in His Word. God knows His own reasons why He insists on some things, and plainly sets them forth as the things that we should try ourselves by rather than others. It may be it is because He knows that these things are attended with less perplexity, and that we are less liable to be deceived by them than others. He best knows

our nature; and He knows the nature and manner of His own operations; and He best knows the way of our safety; He knows what allowances to make for different states of His Church, and different tempers of particular persons, and varieties in the manner of His own operations, how far nature may resemble grace, and how far nature may be mixed with grace, what affections may rise from imagination, and how far imagination may be mixed with spiritual illumination. And therefore it is our wisdom not to take His work out of His hands; but to follow Him, and lay the stress of the judgment of ourselves there where He has directed us. If we do otherwise, no wonder if we are bewildered, confounded, and fatally deluded.

But if we had got into the way of looking chiefly at those things which Christ and His apostles and prophets insisted on; and so, in judging of ourselves and others, chiefly regarding practical exercises and effects of grace, not neglecting other things, it would be of manifold happy consequence. It would above all things tend to the conviction of deluded hypocrites, and to prevent the delusion of those whose hearts were never brought to a thorough compliance with the strait and narrow way which leads to life. It would tend to deliver us from innumerable perplexities, arising from the various inconsistent schemes there are about methods and steps of experience. It would greatly tend to prevent professors neglecting strictness of life, and tend to promote their engagedness and

earnestness in their Christian walk. And it would become fashionable for men to show their Christianity more by an amiable distinguished behaviour, than by an abundant and excessive declaring their experiences. We should get into the way of appearing lively in religion, more by being lively in the service of God and our generation, than by the liveliness and forwardness of our tongues, and making a business of proclaiming on the house-tops with our mouths the holy and eminent acts and exercises of our own hearts Christians that are intimate friends would talk together of their experiences and comforts, in a manner better becoming Christian humility and modesty, and more to each other's profit; their tongues not running before, but rather going behind their hands and feet, after the prudent example of the blessed apostle; and many occasions of spiritual pride would be cut off; and so a great door shut against the devil. And a great many of the main stumbling-blocks against experimental and powerful religion would be declared and manifested in such a way that, instead of hardening spectators and exceedingly promoting infidelity and atheism, would above all things tend to convince men that there is a reality in religion, and greatly awaken them, and win them, by convincing their consciences of the importance and excellency of religion. Thus the light of professors would so *shine before men, that others seeing their good works would glorify their Father which is in heaven.*

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